SWS/004/0026/5

8.89

August 1989

Voices Rising

a bulletin about women and popular education

SPECIAL REPORT:

Building the Movement: A Women's Leadership Seminar in International Adult Education

Quito, Ecuador

October 1988





August 1989

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Voices Rising is published twice yearly in English, Spanish and French.

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Voices Rising is the central networking tool of the ICAE Women's Program, and aims to: promote the sharing of experiences, provide a forum for debate and discussion of key issues for women educators, share information on useful resources, and foster the development of a feminist practice in popular education which makes connections between broad social struggles and the personal issues and oppression women face in their daily lives.

We welcome letters or short articles on your work and experiences. Through your contributions and involvement we can deepen our understanding and develop more effective strategies for action.

The ICAE's Women's Program links educators and organizers in different regions of the world who are working to develop education as a tool for social change and empowerment of women.

The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) is an international non-governmental organization with national member associations in over 90 countries, and networks in a variety of areas, including : peace, literacy, community health and popular education, worker's education, and participatory research as well as the Women's Program. All networks are decentralized and coordinated by individuals and groups in different regions of the world.

The Women's program is coordinated from Canada by the Participatory Research Group (PRG) working in collaboration with key contacts from various regions. PRG is a popular educationa and research collective.

The following agencies provided support to "Building the Movement" the leadership development seminar in Quito, and to this issue of *Voices Rising*: Agricultural Missions, USA; UNIFEM SIDA Women & Development; Unicef-Colombial Partnership Africa Canada; Anglican Church of Canada; CIDA-INGO; United Church of Canada.

The following agencies have provided ongoing financial support to the Women's Program: CIDA, SIDA, NOVIB, and FINNEDA.

Building Leadership, Building the Movement *

The main focus of this issue of Voices Rising is "Building the Movement: A Women's Leadership Seminar in International Adult Education" which was jointly organized by the ICAE Women's Program and the Women's Network of CEAAL--the Latin American Council for Adult Education--and took place last October in Quito, Ecuador. This special report is made up of the words and reflections of participants on the central themes of the seminar. They are woven together, not to present one voice or viewpoint, but rather to reflect the strength and creativity generated when committed activists and educators come together to share, enjoy and learn from one another. The meeting left us invigorated with new ideas and a sense of great possibilities.

SPECIAL REPORT

"If an international network is to be any use it must serve the efforts of local organizing and set its agenda in terms of the needs and priorities emerging from that base."

These words by Lean Heng set the stage for five days of intensive work in Quito. Through the week we struggled from different entry points through a maze of issues, considering ways in which that vision might be transformed into concrete actions. This was not an easy task for it involved so many different people, contexts and perspectives.

The seminar had been titled "leadership development". It proved, in fact, to be much more than that. It was about learning from each other, about affirming the basis of our movement, about evaluating forms of leadership amongst women, and strategies for developing the leadership of women in relation to the broader movement for adult education.

Building on the momentum of our first international seminar in Montreal in 1987, the ICAE Women's Program wanted to bring together some of the groups and individuals from different regions with whom we've been working most closely over the last few years. The idea was to consolidate the involvement of these key regional contacts in the leadership and activities of the Program and to get a better picture of the links and gaps between women's popular education initiatives and the official structures of adult education in different regions. We also hoped to take up and advance our discussions of some of the central issues identified at that earlier meeting.

Quito, Ecuador was chosen as the venue for the seminar partly because it is the base for the CEAAL Women's Network, the strongest regional network within our international network. Participants were keen to learn from the experience of different groups involved in popular education in Latin America. The women who came brought with them their experience from a wide range of organizations--from popular education groups, women's centres, and national and regional adult education institutions. They combined many decades of experience working at the grassroots level in very different national contexts--with Palestinian women in Lebanon, with homeless women in Bombay, against repressive government conditions in Malaysia, Chile and South Africa. Many have played active roles in the women's and education movement in their countries and their regions; some brought substantial international experience.

The Quito program spanned a number of objectives. There were opportunities for sharing and dis-

* This section was compiled by Lynda Yanz, based on many, many hoursof translation/transcription by Heather Chetwynd and Anibal Viton of tapes from the seminar.

cussion with women's groups in Ecuador (through two days of visits, two public panel discussions and cultural events). There was organized discussion of three central themes--Our Identity: Feminist and Popular Education; Challenges for Building Democratic Organizations; and Building Leadership, Building the Movement. And there was time to plan action for the next steps in the Women's Program and ICAE.

The theme of leadership was woven throughout the seminar both in the formal discussions and in the informal exchanges as women worked together to confront the difficult issues involved in developing alternative forms of education and organization--issues which we've all had to face, with challenge and with pain, both personally and politically. The fruits of the week's hard work, of an intense process of learning to listen, and where necessary, to disagree with one another were evident by the Sunday morning when we began to put together the pieces and plans that had been building through the week. There had been times of frustration and despondency, when it seemed as though we weren't moving anywhere. But as the different groups began to inscribe the flip charts on the four walls of the meeting room with the summary products of their labours, we were able to see just how much we had achieved.

We approved a quite ambitious plan of work for the Women's Program, one involving most of the seminar participants in working groups around special new projects such as the preparation for the ICAE World Assembly, an international action research project, and an Asian training program. We drafted a letter to the ICAE President and Executive requesting their support for the Program and the setting up of international Task Force to strengthen the role of women in the international adult education movement. We requested that an organizational review of the Women's Program be undertaken in order to ensure the Program's accountability to its constituency and to develop a clearer organizational structure within the Program and between the ICAE and the Program.

Beyond these specific outcomes, much headway was made in terms of supporting and strengthening regional networks' own efforts as well as extending their involvement in the international network. This represented an important accomplishment, especially for those regions whose networks are still emerging.

There was much discussion about what kind of "international" work made most sense, and which did not. Participants talked concretely about the kinds of exchanges (of people and materials) that would strengthen local and regional efforts. As in Montreal we reaffirmed the importance of strengthening links with progressive education and women's struggles in North America and Europe, not merely for the useful support work that can be coordinated from the North, but because we want to link women's educational struggles internationally. The Women's Program should not be seen as a Third World network with its technical centre in Canada.

Another important, if less visible outcome, was the discussion about, and proposal for action relating to women's involvement in the adult education movement. The contexts of adult education (approaches, programs and structures) vary tremendously from region to region. No one analysis of the role of women in adult education can thus be established, and equally, there can be no one strategy for taking up women's issues effectively in the field. There was concern however that, where appropriate, regional women's networks continue to urge the integration of gender issues into all aspects of work. Certainly this strategy is currently well underway within the CEAAL Women's Network. At the international level, the seminar called on the ICAE Executive to support the Women's Program's efforts to link women popular educators.



Our identity:
Feminism and Popular Education
Beginning an International Discussion

The seminar opened with a session entitled "Our Identity". Organizers had assumed this would be a fairly straightforward naming of our common reference points in feminism and popular education as a way of moving on to discussions of other themes. We quickly discovered however, that we didn't necessarily share the same perspectives on educational practice or women's organizing. We learned how important it was not to assume a single or unified position at the outset of an encounter, but rather to allow ourselves to develop a unity through the sharing of concrete examples of the salient questions and priorities from our local realities. From that base (the building of which takes listening and re-thinking our own practical and theoretical constructs), there can be a more careful and productive shift to the international perspective. Identifying, clarifying and working towards a mutual understanding of the issues in a more grounded way provided a better, more realistic basis for our program and for the planning of action.

We started this meeting by attempting to base ourselves in our regional particularities, our different experiences. We heard about the present situation from Nicaragua, the impact of political processes in Asia and the role of popular educators, of how they manage themselves vis a vis the situation of the party position where there is not great identification with these political parties. We returned to the African situation and heard about the weight of traditions, religion, and in some cases the great fear of politics where important sectors do not want to think about what is happening or reflect upon situations that will not have an immediate effect upon their lives. This is the great subject of survival, the struggle for survival.

Afterwards we debated and shared different strategies for work with women, how these have developed from work in India, in Peru, in Mali. We shared similar experiences in Africa and Latin America, of attempting to provide small quotas of power, or experiences in power to women's groups. We concluded by recognizing that in these strategies what is important is a process of awareness of the women, a discussion of the problems.

In each of these the important role of education kept coming up, without using many adjectives to name it. Depending on the political and social context, different elements are taken into this work (literacy, productive work, popular kitchens, etc.) although, within our multiplicity of experiences, it seems there is always the possibility of raising the demands around survival and the gender issue, of being creative in this respect.

(Teresa, Chile)

In some contexts the terms feminism and popular education don't mean anything. What we are trying to do is not so much come to a common definition but to explore whether there is a common identity in terms of our approach to education and working for women, if and how there is a basis of unity for an international network. The challenge is to recognize and deal constructively with the genuine differences between us, and also to recognize that unity does not require that we be identical to one another. We do not have to become one in order to work together ... What are the differences? What can we learn from one another? How do we want to work together?

(Lynda, Canada)

How are we incorporating this perspective of women in the building of popular education which reflects the complexities of our reality and which advances the democratization process in our countries. What I'm concerned about is this theme of an international perspective of popular

education, because I feel that popular education per se doesn't mean much. Popular education means something if it produces change in people's practice, and women specifically, and if these lead to changes in the content of popular education. I think this is perhaps the key point in reflecting on any research we carry out.

(Gina, Peru)

In Africa women go to jail . . . but there are other forms of prison as well. If I look at the face of a country like Sudan or even my country, we have a growing situation where women are veiled and maintained in a kind of prison. We haven't seen this for a long time and now it's coming very fast. And at the same time we are trying to develop into a modern society.

(Lalla, Mali)

At the beginning AMNLAE mainly focussed on calling upon women to become integrated into revolutionary tasks, and to take part in productive tasks, in military tasks, in defending the revolution. There was no discourse about gender. To speak of gender at that time was to be out of context. Or at least that's what we said about "special claims", that they were out of context, that the priority was to defend the revolution. But today we consider that truly, the defence of the revolution is the defence of ourselves as women. Our emancipation requires the political context of the revolution, but we also think that we cannot wait until the war is over to put forward our claims.

(Sylvia, Nicaragua)

First of all is the fact that we are Palestinians, and secondly, that we are women. As Palestinians we are committed, we are part of the Palestine National Liberation Movement. We belong to women's organizations in order to achieve our national rights: the right of returning to our country, the right to self-determination, the right to establish an independent territory. This is why we are organizing in Lebanon and have been since our exile. Also we are working as women so that we can become productive in this process, and take our place in the struggle, in our community, and become part of the political decision-making in our national liberation.

We see our participation in the Women's Program or any international network in this light. Thus what we require from you is not only in terms of our work with women and our leadership as women, but also you helping us in achieving our aspirations, our national pride. And at this juncture we, as Palestinians in exile, believe the main objective is to support the uprising.

(Leila, Lebanon)

It is somehow unavoidable, when we talk about a network, to make a comparison with fishermen. [Net and network are the same word in Spanish.] Quercum is a a Mapuche word I learned in Chile some time ago meaning "time of active waiting." It is what fishermen do when they can't go fishing, when the sea is stormy and doesn't allow fishing . . . so they gather, share experiences, talk about their decisions, the new things they've seen in the sea, and they repair their nets, hooks, boats . . . This meeting has reminded me of that--a small group with such different experiences, trying to weave a large net, to cover all the world.

(Beatriz, Brazil)

Five years ago I would quite likely have rejected an invitation to participate in an international seminar, thinking it had nothing to do with me, with my work. But now we find that if our local collectives are to survive, they need to network. City networks have to link with other cities and then this has to go on at a regional level. I have read about the process of organization in Latin America, and the kind of lessons that people have learned are really inspirational. It's like I'm taking one step at a time and finding that this kind of peer group process helpes me climb the steps I need to take.

(Sheela, India)

Because of the ways some individuals from regional and international groups have crossed our paths, it's built a lot of resistance in me. But in the last number of years in the intensive struggle and work that I've been engaged in, mainly with the women workers, through that work and coupled with the different readings and learning of experiences of people from other regions, it's brought me quite a different perspective. I think now that regional and international work, if it is done properly can help to support and further consolidate the work at the base. And that's what ultimately is the test of "networking", at whatever level.

(Lean, Malaysia)

We face an enormous contradiction in the U.S. We work with people who have serious problems in their everyday lives, economic problems, problems that women face in any other part of the world. And we educators/activists need to work to solve those problems. At the same time, because we are in the U.S., we have to understand how our work relates to what is going on in the rest of the world. The trick is that we always have to look with two eyes on what we're working at. The question for us is how we do in-depth organizing more on a local level and at the same time do educational work to build a sense of internationalism and connections to what is going on in the rest of the world.

(Sue, USA)

We have to look at the context of our work, and of the people we work with. All of us are affected by the international economic order, and the multinationals. And among the people we live and work with the crucial problem is survival, survival in terms of home, food, fuel, land. And repression, and occupation, whether it takes place in our factories, in occupied territories, or in the rural areas where in the Philippines there is currently a lot of militarization.

All us are working with both men and women, the landless, the workers. Although we have differences, we also come up with common issues . . . like the importance of consolidating grassroots organizations. The question is how do we use this network to build, to strengthen, to expand, to consolidate our existing grassroots organizations?

Of course there's also the need for solidarity, solidarity can come in the form of solidarity for the prisoners, and solidarity to support activist work.

(Carol, Philippines)

It seems that at the moment, the EBAE Women's Sub-Committee could help its sisters most of all in the following ways: that we exchange information with other regional organizations and national bodies on the nature of our work, its objectives and aims, recognizing both the similarities and the differences of our operating structures, and that we aid women's organizations in the other regions who are appealing for funding to agencies in terms of information, advice and, where necessary, representations to such funding agencies.

(Leny, England)

When the five-day International Seminar on Women's Leadership in Adult Education began, Quito, a sunny friendly city, welcomed a group of twenty women from all over the world, confident in creating new solidarity links and working guidelines to develop through thought and action the presence of the women's movement in the process of social transformation.

Women's Program coordinator, Lynda Yanz, inaugurated the event. Her words renewed the expectations of Ecuador women. She stressed the importance of the seminar's main theme: a reflection on women's leadership, on our experience as leaders, and on the responsibility and potential of this very political role, especially in the international context. It was only after that first day of introductions that I experienced of the full impact of the event. The women participating in the seminar came from all regions of the world: Arab countries, South and South-East Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, North America and Latin America. I felt so at home with these relaxed, open, funny women who were all involved in actvities important for women all around the world. They were going to visit women's grassroots groups in Ecuador, something that was certain to have a profound effect, since it was the first time that such interchange and solidarity with leaders in adult education was to take place in our country.

The schedule included a program of visits to grassroots women's organizations to allow for a direct knowledge of their work towards social change, to share experiences and to build solidarity links. It was an intense and mobilizing experience for all of us. I think the Ecuadorean women reacted as one; we were amazed to know of the hardships of life in other contexts. We knew about apartheid, for example, but we could feel its extent through Shirley Walters' testimony, asking for solidarity with women imprisoned for struggling against legalized racism. Her words made us feel an unconditional sisterhood. The same thing happened when we listened to accounts of the forced displacements and repression against Palestinians on the West Bank, in Gaza and in Lebanon. The contrast with our Latin American reality was immense. It is true that we live in a crisis situation, marginalized, even in extreme poverty, but I now realize that we must value the fact that we have a place, a territory we can call motherland, that our heritage has been kept in books, in the arts and in our hearts.

Our guests visited organizations in three important cities of Ecuador, Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca; they also participated in a meeting at the "Maria Quilla" Centre, with representatives of women's organizations from different provinces in order to broaden discussion to the national level. After discussing the visits with several of our sisters I sensed a common feeling: the awareness of feminist issues as a worldwide issue, common to all women regardless of race, class, language, religion, culture or nationality. In this sense there is an universal category of gender, which legitimizes feminist theory as a social science and feminist leadership as an international political line of action.

Cecilia Miño Grijalva,
"Maria Quilla" Centre for Research and Action on Women's Conditions
(local hosts to the Quito Seminar)



Leadership and Women in International Adult Education

Shirley Walters

Lynda: *I feel guilty taking clear leadership.*

Shirley: *Why? Surely we have to acknowledge the questions of authority and power. If authority has been given to you why can you not exercise it within the parameters of that authority. For me the problem is not exercising authority, it is a question of who gives the authority and who can take it away. That is one of the crucial components of democratic leadership.*

Honor: *Yes, it's all very well for you to be so clear about it, but you didn't have to go through the "New Left" and the Women's Movement of the 1960s!*

This is an extract of one of the many informal but intense exchanges which were part of the seminar in Quito. It may not seem surprising that the conversations were so impregnated with discussions about leadership--the official theme for the week was "women and leadership in international adult education." But I was surprised.

En route to Quito I had to stop over in Lima, Peru. There I spent 36 hours with women from the Manuela Ramos Movement. They didn't know me; I didn't know them. But in a very short time I was involved in numerous discussions at lunch, at tea, in the car--and it was all about democratic organizations and leadership. Then in Ecuador, in the seminar and amongst members of the organizations we visited, similar issues were were raised. It all seems to point to an important "moment" in the development of feminist thought on organizational theory and practice.

Questions that came to mind while I was participating in these discussions were: Why do many women feel guilty about taking on leadership roles? Why have the notions of leadership developed in the women's movement as they have? Why are the issues of power and authority so often denied? How have these conceptions helped and hindered the development of leadership amongst women? What are the competing notions of leadership which are emerging within the movement? How and why are they changing and with what effect?

Clearly it is not possible to even begin to answer these questions in this limited space, even if the answers were at hand. All that is possible here is to name the questions and to point to how they emerged during the time and space of the seminar in Ecuador.

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Reflecting back on the context of the re-emergence of the feminist movement in the 1960s, with its critique of the dominating practices within the institutions of daily life and within the male-dominated contemporary social movements, it is easy to understand why such a conscious attempt was made to achieve participatory democracy in practice. The concepts of participatory democracy, equality, liberty and community, emphasized that everyone should participate in decisions that affect their lives and that everyone's contribution was equally valid. These ideas led easily to the idea that all hierarchy was "bad", and that power and authority were "bad".

Many critiques of what is increasingly being seen as a naive view of organization have been developed over the years. One example is of Jo Freeman's work of 1975 on "The Politics of Women's Liberation". She argues very strongly that:

Although the ideology damned the idea of leadership, the movement was not without leaders.... Much of the energy of past women's movements had been directed to having the structures of decision-making...formalized so that the exclusion of women could be confronted directly. It is particularly ironic that the women's movement should inflict upon itself a problem it's been fighting for centuries. When informal elites are combined with a myth of "structureless" there can be no attempt to put limits on the use of power because the means of doing so have been eliminated. The groups then have no means of compelling responsibility from the elites who dominate them. They cannot even admit they exist.

Now most of us involved in women's organizations are aware of these critiques--many of us agree with them whole-heartedly. We've experienced the issues first hand as either part of the inner or outer circle! But we still feel guilty about accepting leadership, especially our own leadership--why?

Gina Vargas of Peru spoke in her presentation about the difficulty women have with either assuming or granting leadership. This she argued left women outside of the power structures in the society and unable to really affect change substantially. She described the change that has been occurring within the movement in Latin America. Women were beginning to recognize that they had a responsibility to take on leadership positions and that the women's movement was about political power and it was naive to deny the reality of power and the need to challenge it.

But, Gina argued, there was a need to reinterpret the concept of leadership and to ask what a feminist conception of leadership should be. Three aspects which she felt needed to be considered for a feminist conception of leadership were: the question of relative autonomy for the movement, the need to form broad alliances with other women where authoritarian and imposing behaviour is countered, and the need to fight against the competitiveness of leadership in movements. She believed leadership should strengthen women and the women's movement. Women should stop running away from the responsibility of leadership.

Honor Ford-Smith posed similar questions and problems when she reflected on the experience of the Sistren organization in Jamaica. She described how on the one hand, Jamaica has a long history of strong, charismatic leadership based on patronage. And this type of leadership is often respected. On the other hand, in the women's organizations like Sistren, she says that:

"We have shied away from the question of leadership as we have wanted to be collective and democratic. In the process we lost the ability to win certain struggles."

In the case of Sistren, a very important critique of the power relations that actually existed, as opposed to what members wanted to believe existed, was developed. The impact of class, race and education on informal leadership were clearly enunciated. Honor argues that in order for women to begin to grapple with the problems of middle-class domination over working-class members, there must be an acknowledgement that unequal distribution of power exists. Once that has occurred there is a need for the development of "clearcut rules of the game". (This argument resonates with that of Jo Freeman above.)

Both Gina and Honor's arguments, which draw on their long and substantial experience in the women's movement, highlight the need for women to confront the questions of power and authority. They both are very clear that this is not an easy process as women still need to problematize the notion of leadership. But perhaps we need to start at another point--a point which does not deny the importance of women taking on the responsibility of leadership but which looks at what the positive and negative features of leadership are, and in the light of that take another look at what a feminist notion of leadership should be.

Similar to the experiences of Gina in Peru and Honor in Jamaica, I have found within organizations in South Africa more and more people are acknowledging the political nature of organization and the importance of not "being married to" one form of organization. Forms of organization should be determined by the aims and purposes of the organization. We have found that it is important to acknowledge the contradictions and tensions that exist in the theory and practice of participatory forms of organization. As in so many community organizations around the world, participatory democracy has informed many of the women's and other organizations who are fight-

We need to be able to share our training programs, because we want to create grassroots leaders, because we all feel that it is mostly the middle class who are at the forefront of these organizations. How do we train grassroots leaders? What popular education methods work best with the different sectors and experiences women come from?

(Carol, Philippines)

When we are talking about leadership that discussion can't be separated from the commitment and work we're doing on the ground. When we're talking about leadership, we can't separate that from the question of how we organize women to take initiatives in their context, in their society. This is the approach to leadership that takes up the challenge of popular education. It means looking self-critically at how we are leaders. We can't be complacent in saying we are leaders, and yet we need to take responsibility for our leadership roles within organizations and movements.

(Lynda, Canada)



After the destruction of the Palestinian camps, only organizations such as ours, which were built on a collective structure were able to survive and rebuild what had been destroyed. This meant consistently organizing women to take the initiative, to take leadership. This is the best meaning of leadership in our society.

It's important that we as leaders understand that we must be dispensable. We must create new leaders. This should be a priority in all our work. That brings us back to the political question of how do we organize women? We cannot enter and organize women on theories, slogans. We have to respond to their immediate needs, whether it is poverty, food, political rights or national liberation. We must respond to their needs and to what they want. Understanding that is a test of our leadership. Experience has shown us, for example, that women in Lebanon cannot be organized around the issue of equality. They would laugh at us if we tried this. What they want is to defend themselves and their families. What they want is to have clothes, and to go back to their country. This is what the women consider as priorities.

(Leila, Lebanon)

ing injustice in South Africa. There is no space here to elaborate in detail on these debates but two examples will suffice to illustrate the point.

Inherent in participatory democratic practices is the need for degrees of openness and trust. There needs to be a supportive, open, consensus-seeking climate which is essential for the sharing of responsibility which is at the heart of this form of organization. However, this participatory democratic practice tends to deny the reality of conflict within organizations. Conflict in South African organizations is inherent--along either class, race, ideological, or gender lines. The lack of acknowledgement of conflict has often resulted in conflicting interest groups organizing in clandestine ways, which is the very antithesis of the "openness and honesty" so essential to participatory democratic practice.

Another example of a contradictory practice within participatory organization relates to the question of leadership. In South Africa leadership within participatory democratic organizations is usually shared by all members of the collective. No one is given authority to lead. In many instances a laissez faire climate, closer to anarchy than democracy, exists where anyone wishing to assert leadership is shouted down. A malaise sets in where no one dares to show leadership for fear of being accused of being "undemocratic". In the heightened political climate in which people organize, increasingly questions are being asked about the appropriateness of the participatory democratic form which can so often result in paralysis rather than action. Many people are acknowledging the need for strong vision and leadership to propel organizations forward.

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One of the responses to the above analysis of organization is the development of other conceptions of democratic leadership. These have been strongly influenced by the progressive trade union movement. In these conceptions of what has been called "collectivist democracy" both the importance of mass participation and the importance of clear leadership is acknowledged. On the one hand the importance of participation of as many people as possible in the processes of major decision-making is stressed, while on the other, there is acknowledgement of the importance of clear delegation of power and authority to leadership in order to both get tasks done and to drive the organizations forward. Mandates are given to leaders who must be accountable to the members through regular reports back. The membership has the authority to both give and recall mandates of the leadership. It is therefore not the existence of power and authority in organizations that is most important, but the question of who has the power to give and recall that authority.

There are many questions that still need to be addressed as we strive to develop a more adequate notion of leadership within the feminist movement. At the seminar in Ecuador there appeared to be agreement on one issue at least--we need to move beyond the denial of leadership and the necessary political power and authority that implies. But we also need to continue to challenge traditional features of leadership in practice, such as the pervasiveness of authoritarianism and competition. We need to ask whether it is the authoritarianism and competitiveness within predominantly male leadership against which we have reacted in the movement. If this is the case, a question which could potentially move us towards finding a more satisfactory feminist notion of leadership could be: What would leadership be like which works actively against authoritarian and competitive practices?

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Strategic Contradictions

Organizational Democracy and Dependence on International Aid

by Honor Ford-Smith

The following is a brief excerpt from the conclusion of a forthcoming Women's Program publication about Sistren, a women's popular theatre group in Jamaica. **Strategic Contradictions** ***is a detailed account of Sistren's historical and organizational development since 1977. Honor presented draft sections from her case study as a catalyst for discussion in Quito.***

At the start, I drew attention to the importance of strengthening the feminist movement at this moment in Caribbean history and to the question why many new feminist organizations as yet have been unable to affect women's conditions of life in a fundamental way. In the case of Sistren I have argued that the group was restricted in its impact because of its internal structure and the effects of the funding policies of international aid agencies.

Collective Contradictions

From the beginning, a major problem was the way in which the group came in practice to equate democracy with a single notion--that of collective decision making.

The undifferentiated collective form has a number of problems. It can be antithetical to productivity and service delivery because it tends to substitute internal practice with a single notion--that of collective decision making. Where it functions in the conservative capitalist third world [it often] masks the continuation of the central contradictions of capitalist societies--such as race and class. Where ideological variety or differences exist within a group these become obstacles to sameness rather than opportunities to develop the richness and complexity of the group's work. The undifferentiated collective structure lends itself to the exercise of power by informal leaders whose roles can never be clearly defined, who are not clearly accountable internally in the group, and who tend to operate covertly. Real processes of decision making then become masked and the organization becomes bogged down in the morass of endless meetings, low productivity, a sense of diffused responsibility and low morale.

From the beginning, a major problem was the way in which the group came in practice to equate democracy with a single notion--that of collective decision making.

. . . In Sistren's history the phase of intense collectivity was a necessary one, [in that] it unquestionably exposed members to areas of decision making involved in running the organization and acquainted everyone with the skills of advocacy. At this point in the organization's growth however, the movement toward some specialization and differentiation also seems necessary and inevitable if its problems are to be solved.

What shape then can be envisioned for a democratic organization which is not a collective? There can be no dogmatic answer to this question. Just as the collective decision making model works in some situations, but not in others, there can be no one true democratic organizational form, which will work effectively across cultures and in different political and economic contexts. ... [In this search, t]wo concepts in need of fuller discussion are those of management and leadership.

In the effort to throw out the idea of the personality cult and the charismatic leader, the progressive movement has not really defined alternative forms of leadership. For women's groups it is perhaps especially difficult to grant and accept leadership from other women. Historically women have been excluded from the processes by which power has



come to reside in particular people or groups of people. Male, white, middle-class privilege has been so founded on hierarchy, division and specialization that the women's movement has been cautious about reproducing forms which seemed to imitate these models. At the same time, in organizations where women have granted leadership, maternalism and the dominant form of race and class power are often reflected. In the Caribbean it is particularly difficult to come to terms with the issue of leadership because of the way race and class and skill are tied and because resistance to these forms of domination are often covert, informal and unnamed. However to avoid the discussion of leadership is no solution at all. ...

The term management also tends to be interpreted as an authoritarian big boot, squeezing the life blood out of its underlings. Management in our setting carries the connotation of exploiters from "the evil empire" of capitalism. ... [But in r]ejecting the worst of capitalism we must be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water. Management and leadership, whether they reside in individuals or in groups of people need to be controlled by defining both what they are to manage and how they can be accountable and removable at different moments in an organization's life. ... Issues of skills transfer and education could then be addressed in a systematic and consistent way. A key concept in thinking about democratic management then is accountability--a concept which can be applied differently both within an organization and externally with those it serves.

The Politics of "Aid"

A second major problem which confronted Sistren was the effect of international funding policies on the organization. Agencies funding projects in the Third World have an enormous amount of power. One only has to glimpse the files of any agency involved in so-called development to recognize the enormous amounts of information they have accumulated about progressive organizations and the amount of power the dispensing of funds gives them over people's lives all over the world. They are able to shape the lives of the organizations they support, not simply because they fund them, but also because of the processes they require the agencies to become involved in. The term "partner" currently being used by donor agencies to describe their relationship with recipient organizations only obscures what remains a very real power relation. This egalitarian label does not change the reality.

One area which women's groups need to face squarely concerns the tendency on the part of agencies to prioritize material production over educational and cultural processes and to see these areas as separate and distinct. This separation in the long run serves to entrench dependency because it means that internal processes of organizational development and transfer of skills are always subsumed under the "more important" process of production. In fact production and education are inextricably linked. ...

On the other hand, to prioritize educational cultural processes over so-called production is to ignore the importance of building up some form of self-financing. Any single issue or set of issues which come to be prioritized for funding by agencies can be used against the development of effective organizational processes. International funding agencies often determine priorities which are applied in a blanket way. Our experience has shown that very careful attention has to be paid to local conditions. The political and cultural context, available skills and resources are all areas which need very careful consideration and which will enormously affect what is possible for any organization. When local factors are not taken into consideration, choices about program activities can be made which have long term negative consequences for local organizations. This is especially so when organizations are young or operate in a conservative context in which there is little capacity for negotiation with more powerful international agencies. When an organiza-

The emphasis of international agencies on funding "grassroots" women seems to be contradictory and simplistic.

tion's survival is at stake, the criteria of international agencies will always take priority over developing processes of accountability to its constituency.

Such mistakes cannot be waved away. Their implications mushroom into new difficulties which are often harder to deal with than those problems they were originally meant to solve. They involve people's lives, hopes, energies, investments and resources in deep ways. The disillusionment and bitterness they create deeply affect an organization's potential to have an impact on its community and to build a healthy working culture.

Finally, the emphasis of international agencies on funding "grassroots" women seems to be contradictory and simplistic. Grassroots women are not miracle workers and like anyone else need to study and understand a situation before they can work effectively in it. ... Agency policies sometimes emphasize the delivery of funding to grassroots women while ignoring the many complex processes in which both gender and many classes are involved, processes which reproduce the conditions the funding is meant to alleviate. [T]he effect often does not contribute to social transformation. In fact, as was the experience of Sistren, it can reproduce relationships of dependency and domination both internally inside groups and between aid agencies and recipients.

Organizations like Sistren are not at the stage where they can do without these foreign funders. Neither is it the first time in history that organizations working for radical transformation in one society require the support of richer groups in conservative societies. It will be a long time before we cease to need foreign funding. Nevertheless we are at a stage where women's organizations working together internationally can use their lobbying power collectively to make these agencies accountable to the groups they are supposed to be serving. Just as we need to be accountable to those we serve so they also need to take on board their accountability to those whom they serve. Collective dialogue is key if groups are to have clear channels of communication and clearer input into the policies of these agencies and the ways in which these are implemented regionally. ...

In many funding agencies there are members of staff who are genuinely concerned about issues of dependency and democracy. These women want to work internationally around some of the struggles we face. The power of the agencies does not exist in a monolithic institutional sense. It operates through people who have a degree of leverage at their disposal. It is up to us to build alliances that are genuinely internationalist in order to bring about changes.

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Financial relations influence the work that we are carrying out and in this way international agencies exert power and control upon the NGOs or popular movements that develop projects. We see that the policies of what type of projects will be financed are always defined outside our countries. At the same time we cannot close our eyes to the fact that the problem is not only outside us. The result of this situation oftentimes is a competition between NGOs for money. Very often these agencies ask other NGOs, what do you think of this or that group and if one is not alert to this we end up being divided. These things become worse when we have financial problems within our own organizations . . . all the different relationships of power and competition make it more difficult to carry out the work we know is important and to work together in truly supportive ways.

(Teresa, Chile)



Simryn Gill

Growing Pains:
reflections on the history of Flora Tristan, Peru

Virginia (Gina) Vargas is the Director of Flora Tristan, one of the strongest and longest running women's centres in Latin America. Virginia's reflections on the centre's history in response to Honor Ford-Smith's presentation provoked much discussion.

In the Flora Tristan Centre what happened was that we suddenly became aware of the contradictions of growing, and all our energy got put into sorting out these internal adjustments so that we weren't accomplishing what we set out to do. Instead of improving, growth in many ways made things worse. It got to a point where certain problems were impossible to ignore. So, at the end of eleven years we were asking ourselves a lot of questions . . . about internal and external accountability, and the need for a much stronger sense of accountability to the broader women's movement. And then also about the problem that comes up in collective structure related to our notions of equality and leadership. It seems that in fighting against the rigidity of what we saw and experiences we'd had in left and other movements, we went to the other extreme.

Something that has caused a great deal of confusion within Flora is the distinction between being a working centre--even a feminist working centre --and being part of the feminist movement. A great number of our difficulties have been to confuse the centre with the movement. In working centres, our programs and projects have to be completed and deadlines met. Feminist work centres can be very feminist but we have very different rhythms, schedules, structures and different uses for money. The movement is something broader; it is a more fluid thing, more flexible. I believe that as service centres we have to accept the consequences of this difference.

In Flora we have gone through stages in coming to terms with this. First we were a small collective. Then, as we grew it was clear that not all of those who came to work in the centre were part of the feminist movement. Many were just developing their consciousness. And it came to a point when it seemed that the collective was operating in opposition or distinct from the feminist movement, especially in terms of administrative issues. In that period I felt we lost all our richness; we were divided--the collective on the one hand, and the work on the other. And this was when we really began to accept a distinction between the work of the centre, which is part of our paid work and that of the movement which is fundamentally volunteer, and outside office hours. The importance of this is coming to terms with the limits and the boundaries of the centre.

While the general dynamics of the movement can be taken up by our centres, there are real limits to the flexibility within the work. This raises the whole question of what you call accountability . . . how and to whom to be accountable. In some instances (and it's not always possible) we've been able to reach understandings or agreements with women's organizations about budgets or work plans we adopt on a joint basis. This is one way you commit yourself ... it becomes an issue of mutual accountability. But to arrive at this point we have had to make a great number of mistakes, and sometimes it creates mistrust.

The problems of women's organizations in different countries are in many ways similar. The major challenge has to do with the relationship between democracy and efficiency. How do we achieve democratic and fluid relationships, where people can feel they are expressing themselves, where they can be doing the work they like, and at the same time be efficient as organizations? The balance is very difficult to achieve and is a great source of conflict. As far as I'm concerned this requires something that we have learned through many years of experience but something we didn't have very clear at the beginning--which is the need for clear-cut channels, of leadership and of the rules of the game or accountability. We are often still not very comfortable with this. This relates to quite deep

limits we face in the feminist movement, things some of us tried to address in the document called "From Need to Love". In part it is because of something that is very much part of us as women, which is a need to see ourselves reflected in other people. There is also our desire to protect. What often happens is that we start to find an important reference in our lives in the organization, we begin to find a space that we didn't have in the past. The organization becomes the father, the mother, the lover...our own space, and an enormous source of conflict, conflict that we haven't been able to solve in our lives.

The following document, From Need to Love, was a collective effort from a workshop entitled "Feminist Politics in Latin America Today" at the Fourth Meeting of Latin American Feminists in Mexico in October 1987. Virginia Vargas shared it with the participants at the Quito seminar.



Simryn Gill

From Need to Love

In comparing experiences from different countries, we find certain myths which are significantly constant. A strong commitment to these beliefs has created a feminist political practice which prevents us positively valuing our differences and makes it difficult to build a feminist political project.

1. *As feminists, we are not interested in power.*
2. *Feminists have a different way of being political.*
3. *All feminists are equal.*
4. *Women have an inherent natural unity.*
5. *Feminism exists as a political rela tionship only between women.*
6. *The small group is the movement.*
7. *Women's spaces, in and of them selves, ensure a positive process.*
8. *I t is valid because I as a woman feel it.*
9. *What is personal is automatically political.*
10. *Consensus equals democracy.*

As feminists, we are not interested in power. If we recognize, first of all, that power is essential to changing existing conditions, we cannot but be interested in it. Through our activism, we have seen that as feminists we are indeed interested in power, but by failing to admit this openly we have made no headway in building democratic power. What we do, in fact, is to exercise power arbitrarily. Furthermore, we reproduce the way in which we handle power within the home environment--that is through victimization and manipulation.

Yes. We do want power; power to change social relations in order to create a democratic society in which the demands of each sector find a space for solution. This requires defining certain rules to play by in order to ensure that the plurality of different social sectors be encompassed. In summary, we want power to build a democratic and participatory society.

This ties us closely with the second myth: Feminists have a different way of being political. Yes, politically we do operate in a backwards, arbitrary, victimized and manipulative manner. In theory, we try to be otherwise, but if we are honest with ourselves we see that our practice leaves much to be desired. This is related to the difficulty we have in reconciling unity with diversity while being democratic, something which is not only a need but also a condition for action. This difficulty makes it impossible for us to establish clear-cut rules to play by.

The non-acceptance of diversity is tied in with another myth. All feminists are equal. In denying the differences between women (in intellect, skills, sensitivity, etc) practice has been paralyzed, making the movement less effective and less significant politically. This myth of equality is connected with another belief that dominates our practice, the idea of "woman as woman" regardless of class, race, age or nationality, and the consequent myth that "women have an inherent natural unity."

All of us know that there are no predetermined actors, but rather that we are all formed within a social context. Women as political subjects, are likewise formed within a social and political context. This idea of natural unity between women, the idea of "womanhood", has been a reoccurring phantom within feminism and is manifested in the fifth myth: Feminism only exists as a political relationship between women. This is in contradiction with the idea of

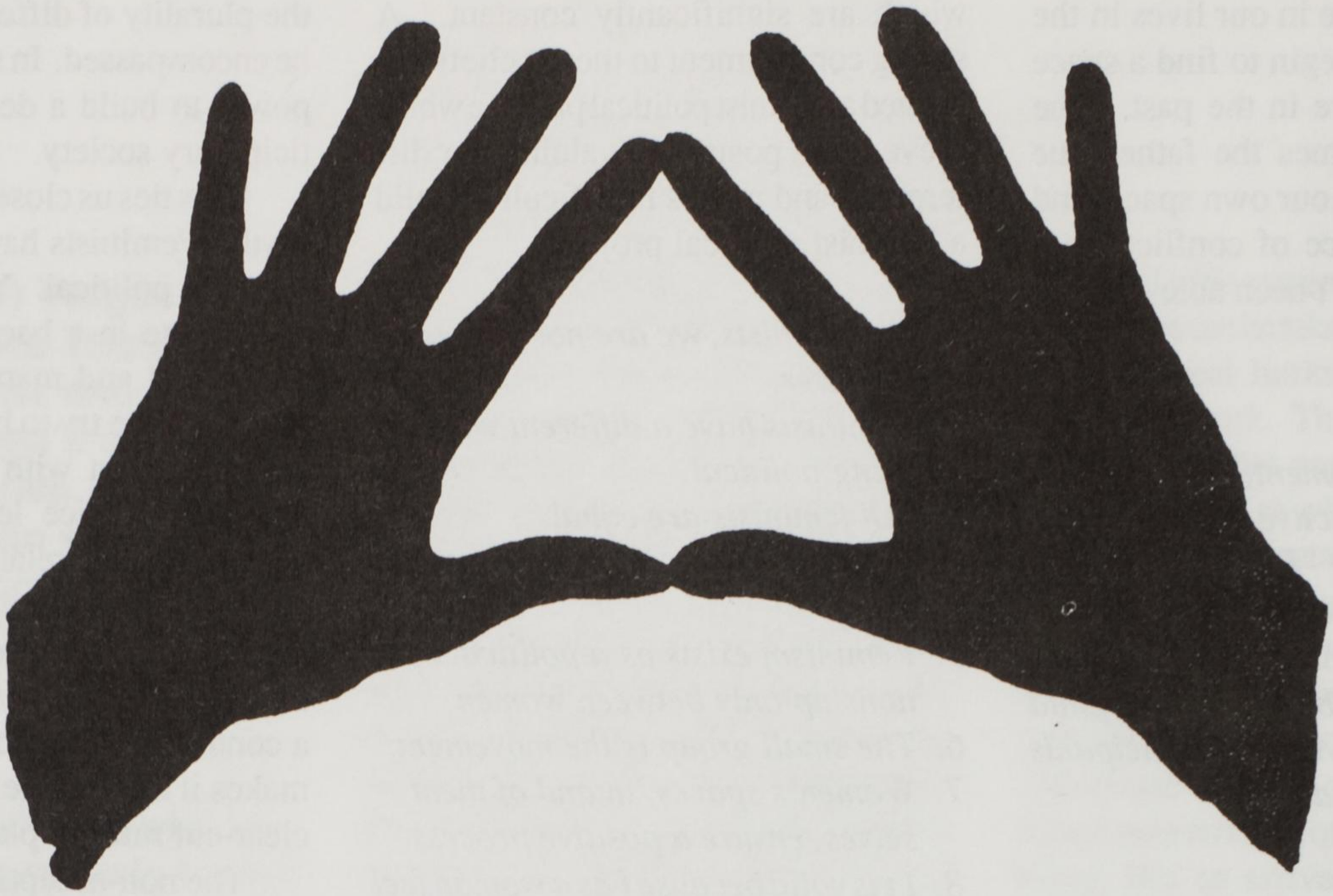
feminism as a transforming force.

The belief of "being a woman," of the natural unity between women, of a political orientation from and for women, has the effect of confusing the feminist group with the feminist movement. This is nothing more than thinking that women's spaces in and of themselves ensure and bring about transformation. This "womanism" has become idealized, ignoring that on countless occasions, women's spaces become asphyxiating ghettos where self-complacency hinders criticism and development. It also involves denying how often we as feminists take what happens in our groups for the movement itself. By remaining within a closed-in group, we are prevented from confronting other women, other ideas, other forms of feminism.

The ninth myth: What is personal is automatically political makes this distinctive slogan of feminism absurd. Although this slogan embodies legitimate criticism of the artificial division between home life and public environment, stating that everything that is personal is automatically political, makes the political automatically arbitrary. There are personal issues that are not political and there are personal issues that are pathological.

One concrete example of such arbitrary politics is the notion that consensus is the expression of democracy. This results in confusing consensus with unanimity, and fails to analyze that consensus implicitly grants someone the right to veto. This mechanism thus becomes the basis for authoritarianism.

These ten myths have been generating a situation of frustration, self-complacency, erosion, inefficiency and confusion, a situation detected by many feminists, who have recognized it as being present in the large majority of



groups involved in politics in Latin America. . . .

We cannot assume that there is an inherent quality to "being a woman." We must acknowledge that our inequality has existed because we have lived in a symbolical and material impoverishment. ... Our interaction with the world has been defined by living for others, with love being our only quality which is considered important. This way of seeing the relationship between women and the world has become the erroneous foundation for the political and social life of feminists, for women's groups and the feminist movement in general. We have developed a "logic of love"--we love each other, we are all equal--which does not allow us to accept conflicts, differences and inequality.

To untangle this interwoven fabric requires putting an end to this "logic of love," and proceeding to a relationship based on need. As women, we need each other in order to affirm ourselves and gather strength. By accepting this need, we recognize our differences and provide for ourselves mutual support, strength and authority. In other words, if we recognize that another woman has something that we do not have, greater organizational capabilities, greater intellectual development, more skills for jobs, etc. then we give her our trust, we value her and we endow her with authority. We find our strength in her strength and we value ourselves as women. The strength of one woman is the strength of all women. In this way we can reject the apparent security that we get from feeling that we are all equal. We do not seek the reflection of equality in order to confirm in ourselves something which is, in fact, not valued. Rather, the idea is to put an end to self complacency, to break with the victim mentality.

Haydée Birgin (Argentina)
Celeste Cambría (Perú)
Fresia Carrasco (Perú)
Viviana Erazo (Chile)
Marta Llamas (México)
Margarita Pisano (Chile)
Adriana SantaCruz ((Chile)
Estela Suárez (México)
Virginia Vargas (Perú)
Victoria Villanueva (Perú)

Summing Up: the common threads

First there was the theme of organizational development in the different regions, which started with the concern from the Asian colleagues to strengthen the coordination process from the local level right up to the international. This is expressed by the development of the NGO movement and, for example, by the need for stable financing, which is a problem raised by all of us. In all the regions there is this need to develop organization, coordination, and also to strengthen and reinforce what already is in place.

Another topic was the importance of deepening our understanding of exchange, not simply "visits" but experiences that entail discussion, debate, and a deep sharing, and learning from different viewpoints. This was a contribution made by the African colleagues, clearly articulating the kind of exchange that we aspire to.

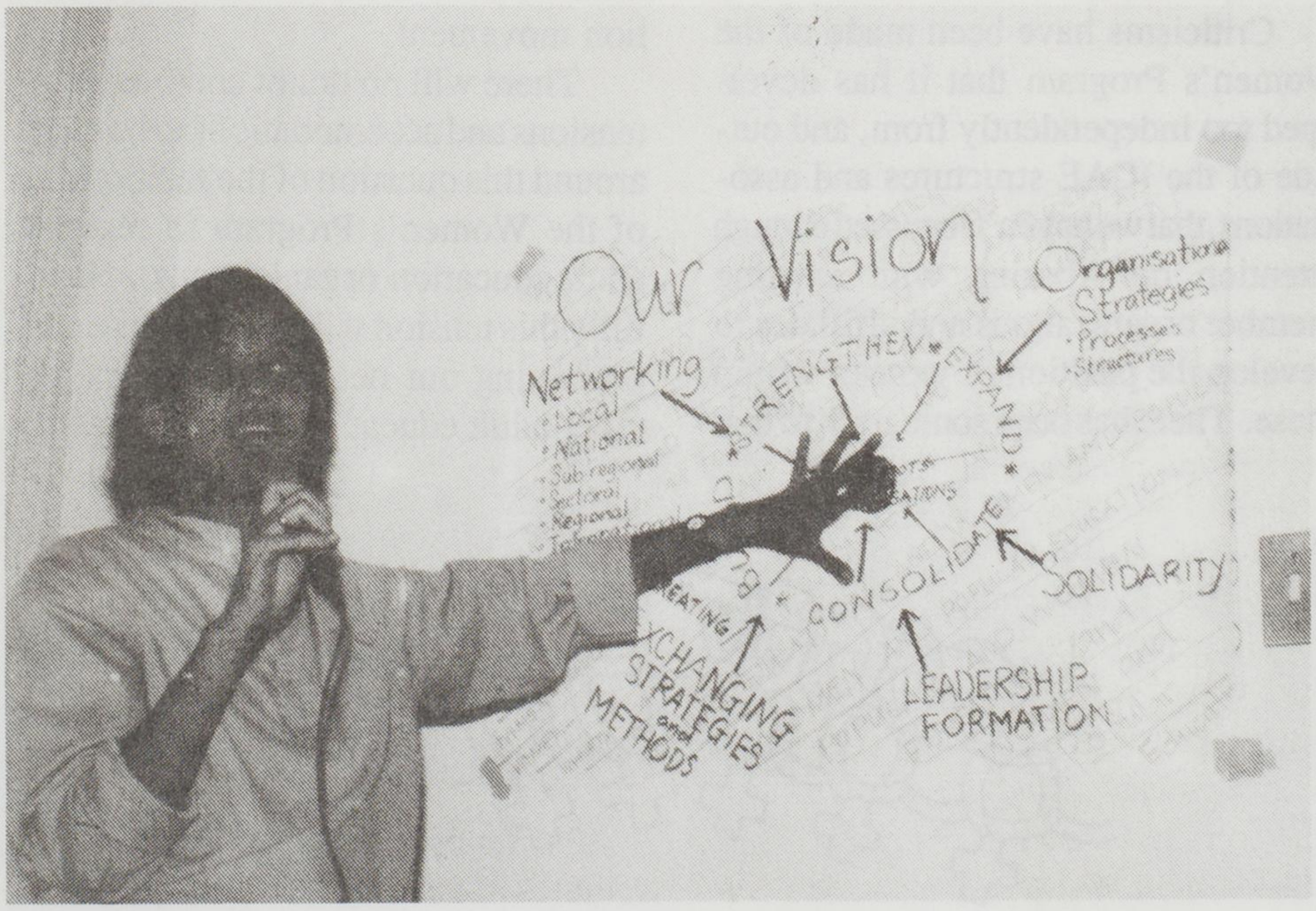
There was a demand for training, which was expressed by colleagues from Africa and Asia, but not only training for educators like us, but also learning how to train grassroots leaders.

The need for research, publications and information was common to all of us, but was expressed differently coming from the perspective of different regions. In Latin America for example there is a need to learn and to produce knowledge from our own practice. In Africa there is a need to increase research capacities and simply to have more materials, so to be able to disseminate information and to find out what's going on in other parts of the world. From the North . . . from North America and Europe we talked about the important role of disseminating information, which very often is not accessible to other countries. . . information on the living conditions and on the issues and divisions in the movement internationally.

Throughout all this is the general call for solidarity which needs to be expressed in all we do, in training, in exchange. It can be something as simple as sharing publications, in sharing the way in which we are going to develop our organizations, although perhaps more intensively in very serious and critical moments when human rights are violated which is now the case in South Africa, in Palestine, and in Central America.

We also raised the importance of having the capacity within our organizations and in the network to respond to "emergency topics" which may not have been so prevalent up to now, but which require that we get involved and work to find responses. Many of these require international strategies. Issues such as "survival strategies" that go beyond mere income generation, the "debt crisis," AIDS, or the sexual trafficking in women that still goes on. And of course there continue to be the larger issues of war and peace, and human rights violations which are shared as concerns in Asia, Africa, Latin and North America and Europe.

(Teresa, Chile)



Moving On:
ICAE Harare Meetings

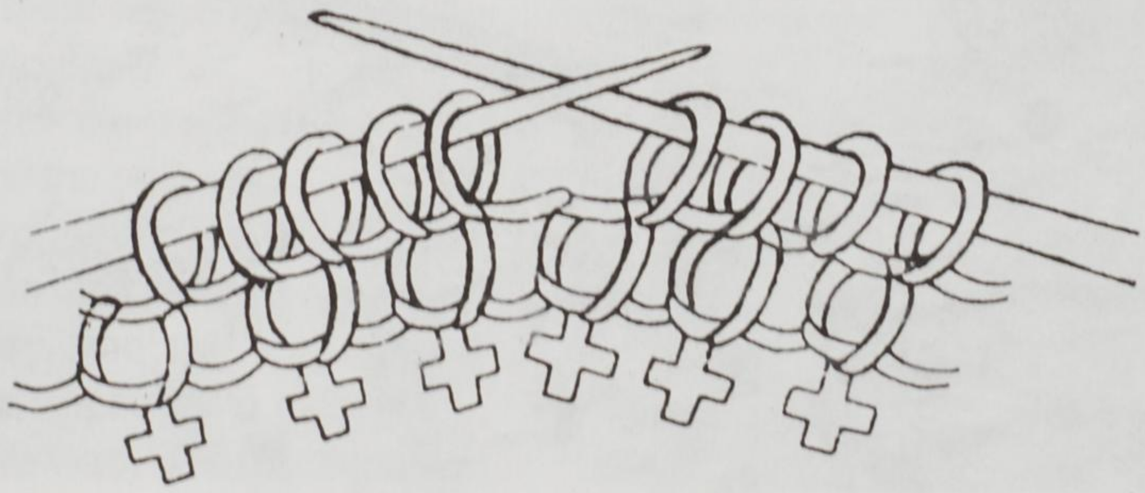
Just over three months after the Quito Seminar, a number of us were together again, this time in Harare, Zimbabwe amidst a much larger gathering of educators attending the ICAE Executive Meetings and a joint ICAE/African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (AALAE) Conference on the Future of Adult Education in Southern Africa.

The Women's Program wanted to take advantage of the Harare meetings to begin the first stage of an exchange program organized with the Women's Network of AALAE, to learn more about education for women in Africa and to strengthen the voice of African women in our network. We also wanted to carry forward the work of Quito by engaging with the ICAE Executive in discussions of the ideas and proposals developed there.

Criticisms have been made of the Women's Program that it has developed too independently from, and outside of the ICAE structures and associations, that we haven't focussed enough attention on working with existing member organizations and affiliates to develop the position of women within these. There has been some truth to that view. We have been concentrating our energies on building links with those groups which are working actively with grassroots women, which are trying to do a different kind of education, one that mobilizes and empowers and that takes a commitment to transforming gender relations as its starting point.

But, as was clear from our discussions in Quito, we have no interest in isolating ourselves. Many groups in the Women's Program network are linked to national and regional adult education structures. Where they are not, this is often due to the ineffectiveness or irrelevance of the existing adult education structures in relation to grassroots groups. Whether we are formally associated with other structures or not, we strongly believe that as educators we are legitimately part of and have much to contribute to the adult education movement.

There will no doubt continue to be tensions and accomodations to be made around this question of the relationship of the Women's Program to regional adult education organizations. Hopefully this tension will be a creative one, prompting our network members and other adult education groups to clarify



Returning home to Ecuador after the meetings in Harare, I had the chance to reflect on that rich and positive experience. For me, one of the most important things was coming to know a bit better the ICAE, its people, commitments and perspectives.

I came away with two strong convictions. The first comes out of the consultation I began with members of the executive about the participation of women in the ICAE. I felt that this was a very valuable dialogue. Since then I've thought a lot about how important it is to know the opinions of the others and maintain an open attitude in order to better facilitate a mutual understanding and a more clear perspective on these issues.

The second aspect of the Harare experience that struck me was the importance of face-to-face exchanges among women. In my opinion this is one of the most effective ways of firmly basing our international work. Engaging with diverse cultures and ways of thinking in order to find common points of interest is the challenge that we face. I believe that the Women's Program has a responsibility to continue to provide oppurtunities for encounters between women to generate real solidarity and unify us.

(Rocio, Ecuador
Vice President CEAAL,
Coordinator of CEAAL
Women's Network)

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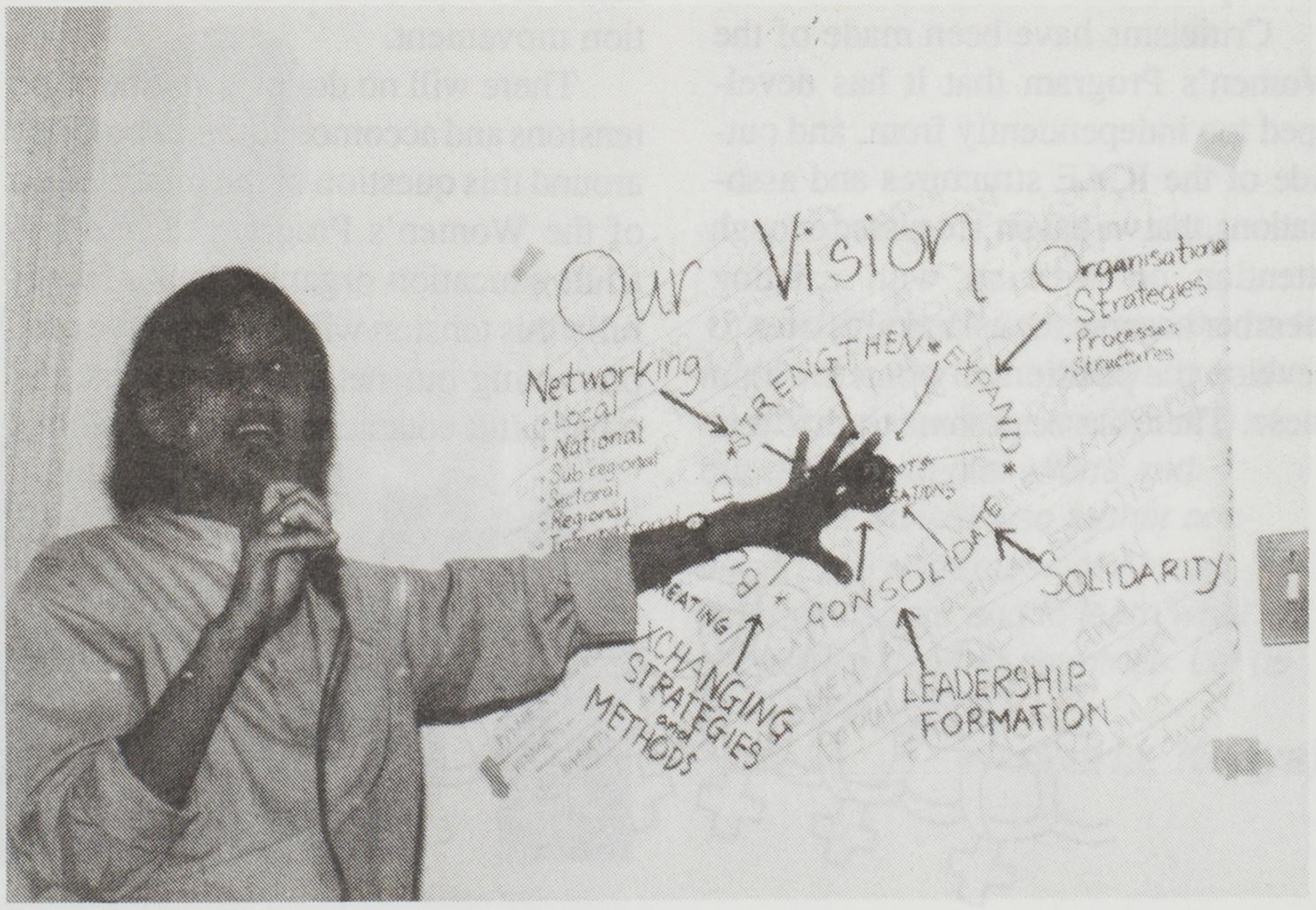
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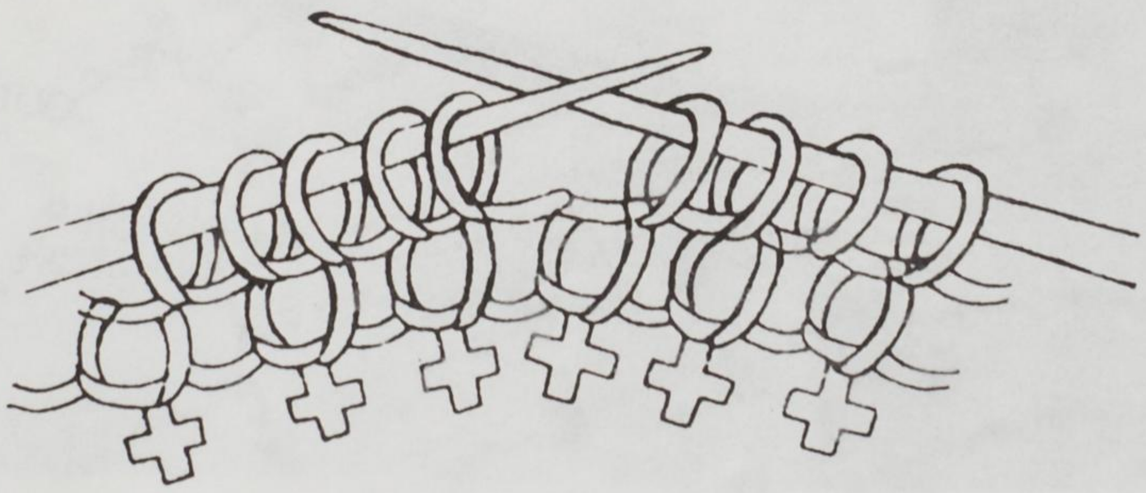
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(Rocio, Ecuador
Vice President CEAAL,
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Women's Network)



photo: Jane Gurr

their responsibilities to their constituencies and to the broader adult education movement. Our presence in Harare showed in a concrete way our commitment to working closely and collaboratively with member associations of the International Council.

At its January 29, 1989 session the ICAE Executive approved the setting up of a Task Force on the Participation of Women with terms of reference which include devising a policy for strengthening the participation of women in ICAE activities and structures; carrying out a survey of the role of women in leadership positions in the ICAE Executive, activities and members associations; monitoring the participation of women in ICAE activities and devising a concrete plan for increasing the numbers of women sitting on the ICAE Executive. The Task Force is to report to the next Executive committee in January 1990. To help begin the work, Rocio Rocero took the opportunity of the Harare meetings to carry out interviews and consult with different participants.



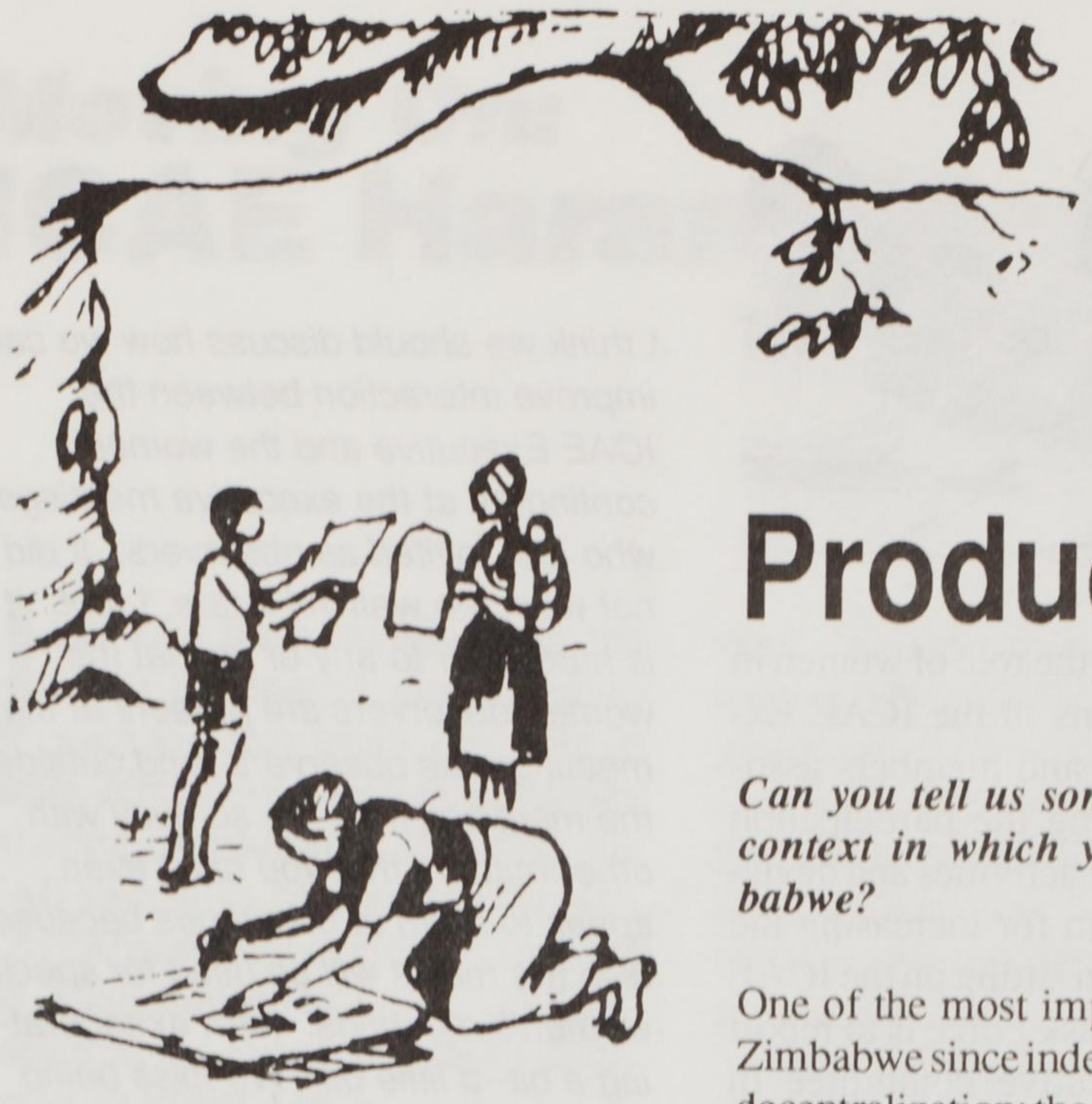
photo: Jane Gurr

I think we should discuss how we can improve interaction between the ICAE Executive and the women's contingent at the executive meetings who are invited as observers. It did not work too well in Harare, I feel. It is hardly fair to any of us that the women-observers are present at the meetings--as observers--and outside the meetings they are so busy with other matters that you can't even speak to them at mealtimes because also the meals will be used for special women's meetings. I am exaggerating a bit--a little bit. We miss being able to talk to the other half of the world about the big issues. I would hate to think that this is not a reciprocal matter.

(ICAE Executive Member)

The South-South encounter seems to have set a wave of awakening to the need for closer links and sharing of our developmental efforts and visions. I think it also further confirmed the eagerness of African womento share and to learn what is happening in other countries. Let us keep up the Spirit.

(Maria, Kenya)



Zimbabwe: Producing a Popular Text

Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, after a lengthy war of liberation against the white-ruled Rhodesian government. Kathy Bond-Stewart has been working with Sylvia Kuimba, Talent Nyathi and Chris Hodzi to produce a popular education book about women and development for the Zimbabwean Ministry of Community and Cooperative Development and the Ministry of Political Affairs (where Women's Affairs is now based). Kathy talked about this exciting and complex process over a lengthy discussion with Jane Gurr and Chan Lean Heng of the Women's Program during the ICAE Executive meetings in Zimbabwe in February, 1989. The interview reveals the creativity that can be unleashed at the grassroots level.

Can you tell us something about the context in which you work in Zimbabwe?

One of the most important changes in Zimbabwe since independence has been decentralization; the setting up of democratically elected village and ward development committees in the communal areas where about 65 percent of the population live. These committees must have at least one woman member each (though some have more and women chairpersons). They are serviced by community workers, and of 8000 community workers in Zimbabwe, the majority are women. Most of the women in leadership positions at this level are capable farmers, with years of liberation struggle experience behind them.

The Ministry of Community Development, which also has some impressive women in top positions, contracted me (and later my three colleagues) to set up a Community Publishing Programme. My only guidelines were to study the reality and to design a critical and imaginative process to support the emerging leadership in the villages. That sort of liberty in Africa is very unusual.

What is the focus of the book on women?

It deals with history and women's economic, political and social situation, and includes women of all ages, regions and backgrounds--from prostitutes and prisoners to leaders and ministers. The book focuses on women's contribution and achievements, as well as problems and strategies. We're also looking at the international dimension. What we hope to achieve in this book is to explain the importance of the full participation of women in all aspects of development, to provide information on the situation of women, and to help change negative attitudes about women held by both women and men. We also want to generate national discussion on women's issues and strategies.

Who will be the audience?

Village leaders, village community workers and educators from different government ministries, and trainers and field workers from non-governmental organizations. The book will be written simply enough to be understood by all literate adults, and designed for both women and men, from rural and urban areas. Although our book is written in a popular form, we hope that it will also be read by donors, policy-makers and researchers.

How did you go about producing the book?

Well, like the two previous books we did with the ministry, we're producing it through a collective process. We have more than doubled the number of

people involved to about 800 contributors throughout Zimbabwe. We started by meeting people from different ministries and from non-governmental organizations in Harare and at the provincial centres. We got from them what they wanted from the book as well as what they could offer.

But the most enjoyable part of our research was our journey throughout Zimbabwe visiting a group of village community workers, and a village, in a district in each of the eight provinces. The ministry has a contact in every village, so they let people know we were coming and why. They would gather the people together and we would explain our purpose--using a lot of music and dance and laughter.

In those meetings what we did was really an intensive listening survey. Although we have mounds of documentation on the situation of women, we tried to suspend everything we'd ever heard or thought about women and go into the situation very fresh. I think it's crucial to develop a kind of humility in this work and to be able to use criticism objectively, because even some quite radical people are so convinced that they have the answer and everyone else is wrong, that they miss a lot.

So we would simply introduce the idea of the book and get people talking about what they wanted and what they could contribute. It was fascinating. The gatherings were often 60-70 people, so we'd break into small groups to get lots of ideas from every single person. Everyone gave us ideas, even quite shy people who are not very used to talking in public. We wanted it to be both confidence building and problem-solving.

An aspect of the process which was quite unusual was that from the very beginning we involved men. We thought it was very important. If it had been a "women's only" publication, very few people would have read it, and it wouldn't have got into any of the institutions or agencies or even into the villages in a way that is really going to make a big difference.

We started this by involving men who we worked with in the past--men who have an official responsibility to work with women. Through them we managed to meet a very wide range of other men. Actually the interchanges between the men and women at the meetings were very lively, and the women were very outspoken.

There would be the male chauvinists at the meetings; we certainly got a lot of those. But we were not looking for oppressive men, we were very open to whatever we found. What was very unusual was that we met a lot of men who talked very strongly about women's great contribution and achievements. To hear men talk like that is very convincing for ordinary Zimbabweans, even for women. We found that contribution from men very valuable.

What was also amusing was that when men tried to interrupt or shout down a woman, the women would say, "We've heard enough of you. You just shut up." That was also very nice!

But I can only think of one case where a very traditional man, an elder, got up and walked away from a meeting. In most of the gatherings the men were absolutely fascinated.

In addition to getting an idea from the people of what they wanted in the book, we also asked for contributions. For the first time instead of interviewing village women, as we did in the past and getting their comments on the shape of the book, we are getting contributions directly. We are asking village women to write, draw, compose poems and send us their songs and plays. We encourage songs and stories and drama in all our workshops. In every village we visited we asked for volunteers to coordinate the collection of the stories. We ended up with hundreds of addresses!

When we got back to Harare we wrote to the people in the villages thanking them for the visit and giving them some guidelines about what we wanted. In Zimbabwe there's a lot of respect for very formal boring English --dead language. We had to really encourage people to work in their own languages and to use the very colourful and strong language they use in everyday life. We gave them ideas on the kind of stories we wanted and topics, and held our breath.

Just last week the stories started coming in, very fast every day. Some



C. Hodzi

lovely drawings as well, and jokes and songs and poems. It's exciting.

It's amazing because there's still some illiteracy in Zimbabwe, and some people always look down on villagers as being illiterate. But when you get 20 pages beautifully written, in perfect handwriting from a very busy village woman you realize there's an incredible capacity which no one ever bothered to tap before. So we are only hoping that through the book and through the workshops we can really develop that.

How do you think you were able to engage this kind of interest?

Because of our process. We spend a few minutes explaining our purpose and then we express a great deal of confidence in the people there--that they have a huge amount to offer--and putting them in very small groups where they would not be shy. And we give them enough time to talk and really think of what they feel strongly about. They came up with delicate issues which we didn't think people would have the courage to raise, touching on very sensitive issues, like suicide of women farmers or abortion among schoolgirls or prostitution.

What happened with this book is that we found all that's best in Zimbabwe and all that's worst. It's fascinating.

We also discovered so much of women's strength. In one case we met a woman chairperson of an irrigation scheme involving about 700 families. It used to be an all-male committee, but nothing was working. So they brought a woman in and everything started moving--to the point where the men did domestic work to help the woman because they suddenly realized what a huge force the women were.

Another example was when we visited a group of women construction workers working with men. The men couldn't stop singing their praises, about how well they were working. The women had pride and confidence.

Another thing we hope to express in the book is humour. There have been very painful moments but there's been a fantastic sense of humour running through all the discussions.

What kind of humour



I think in a way it's part of surviving, because humour can give people wisdom and a broad perspective on issues which would otherwise drive you mad. But it is also the way the women deal with men--they push the men in a way which the men can accept but which is still strong.

What are the next stages in producing the book?

Next month we're doing in-depth interviews of a few people about each of the featured topics in the book. Then we'll put together a rough draft and in about four months we'll send it out to all the districts and people we visited. Afterwards we'll have workshops with the key people from each province, including at least one representative from each of the community groups we visited. We have about a month to pull the book apart with them and then put it back together again. Participants are developing sophisticated editing skills we've found that collective editing is much more effective than working individually.

The final stage will be a last workshop where we'll get the key dynamic leaders from all the provinces together. This is when we work out a national consensus on the final form of the book.

The national consensus is very important because some of the issues in this women's book are going to be controversial. Thus the fact that a book comes from all 55 districts and has been through a national process, makes it both popular and authoritative.

How will the book be distributed?

We hope that it will be printed and translated in early 1990. Then it will be introduced in every district by the extension workers and the village community workers. We'll have lots and lots of workshops--about 1600 in the different languages--to encourage people to just use the book as a starting point to generate their own ideas. These workshops are very important, because we've found that the print media in Zimbabwe is dead unless it's combined with interpersonal communication.

Who will be conducting these workshops around the book?

Mainly the people who helped to pull the book together--the extension workers and educators. They have the final responsibility in terms of distributing it, which gives distribution a whole boost. In Africa distribution has been the main problem. Because people begin with the publication and then think "Now, how are we going to get it out?" But if you begin with the popular organizations there's no problem because the people are very committed to it.

So the workshops around the book will be conducted by the staff from our ministry, mainly district officers, and people from other ministries and NGOs. They will be very important in getting the book out everywhere. All of the best people in terms of the book are the people who went through

that whole struggle of the liberation war. The urban areas are more difficult in that they have very few popular organizations, but again because we have people everywhere we know how to get things out.

Our district officers and extension workers on the whole are good people who've often come through years of experience in the liberation struggle. They earn low salaries, they operate under impossible conditions, and they work long hours. They have very little recognition or respect but they're very important in terms of getting things done in Zimbabwe. Some of them are really marvelous people, very dedicated and inspiring. Most of the women district officers are older married women with lots of kids and very energetic. But there are even some marvelous men. Some of the ex-combatants from the liberation struggle got jobs as district officers in the different ministries. It's quite a low level government job but once you can tap their energy and interest they see it as part of their whole political commitment.

Do you need to train the extension workers in how to give workshops?

That's been an important part of putting the book together. It's very much a tool for training. Instead of someone drawing up a curriculum and someone else writing a textbook, and then it's taken out and it's supposed to be used for training. Foe us the most exciting part of the training is developing the training materials together.

The main thing about the book so far is that the workshops are very confidence-building, because the participants have to take over and run the thing themselves. They get experience in organizing life in a more imaginative and democratic way and they have to learn to deal with conflicts and aggression and shyness.

The process of producing the book must be spinning off a lot of different kinds of developments in communities, and leadership in people and so on.

Yes, I really think so. I see it as about a ten year program. The initial books and workshops are going to become something else, because of the sort of talents and intelligence we're giving space to. Some of the most intelligent women I've met anywhere in Zimbabwe were this group of ex-squatters who had worked in the coffee farms who are now being re-settled--people who no-one pays any attention to. They had the most vigorous analytical minds. We want to find and encourage this energy and talent and creativity, which is left out of so many of the official things which go on in Zimbabwe.

One of the main aims of a process like this is that the kind of skills we have in terms of development and media and adult education become much more the property of every Zimbabwean. For example with the talent we saw emerging there's no reason why every village should not produce in the end novelists, poets, and scientists and philosophers.

One thing I've realized is development has been so dehumanized that people will think about food and houses and water but so little attention is being paid to people's more subtle needs to really have their minds stretched and to discover their talents. I think that giving people a chance to really use their brains and to discover new capacities in themselves is motivating enough in itself because in Zimbabwe we don't challenge people enough intellectually. People, especially in the villages and districts, love being challenged intellectually.

Let's end with the words of the contributors themselves. One of the worst aspects of the oppression of Zimbabwean women in the past (by men, and the colonial regime) was the oppression of their minds, as some contributors describe in the drawing on the following page.

One of the most exciting aspects of post-independence Zimbabwe, not just for women, but for the whole country, is the emergence of more and more women with a new consciousness. It is women like these who have done most to shape our book. Women's wisdom is being restored, as M. Chitumba from Wedza, describes:

"In the past, women had nothing to do with what went on outside their homes. They had nowhere to prove their intelligence. They could only prove to their husbands that they were intelligent. The man would at times use the wisdom gained from his wife on other men where they gathered. With the change of times I have witnessed the change in women's thinking and way of life. They started going out and attending meetings and classes. This was a blessing to women in the communal areas of Zimbabwe. It gave them great wisdom. Women's brains were sharpened; they can now tackle problems as an axe chops wood."

Mrs. B. Ndlovu, from a clinic in Gwanda, expresses what women have felt about contributing to the book: "Tradition did not permit women to show intellectual strength... I am very much overjoyed to be given this opportunity of expressing our views as women in our country, Zimbabwe. We feel very much honoured by the nation. I think and believe that this book will liberate many women in our country."

Kathy Bond-Stewart
Community Publishing Programme
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Zimbabwe

(Thanks to Jill and Don McMaster of CIDA for facilitating rapid communication between Harare and Toronto.)

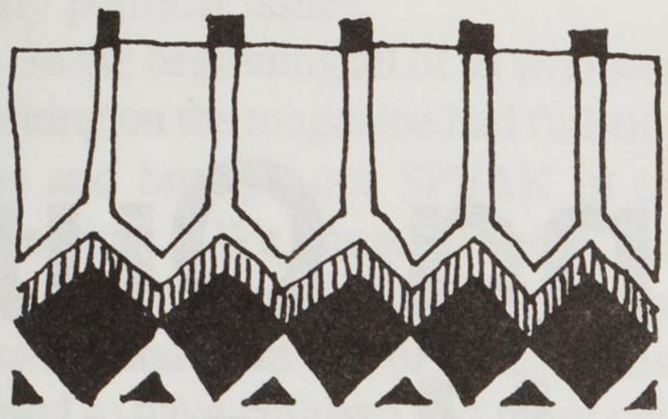
Exploitation, you put a lid on us ... the world was too small for a woman.
You were the lightning that took away the sunshine; for women it was midnight at 12 noon.
Exploitation you swallowed women's wisdom, self-sufficiency has disappeared...

Women's life in the past was like living in hell. If you happened to be a woman in those days you would see yourself as a sad person. The world was like a prison for you. You were not even regarded as someone who could build up something and develop the country. There was nothing you could say as a woman which was considered useful.

Women were seen as part of the luggage in the bandwaggon with men at the controls. They were not supposed to question in which direction they were going, even if it meant going to hell



Quotations from a poem and story by Rosemary Sibanda, Lupane and the Buhera group co-ordinated by Benjamn Murangwa sketch by C. Hodzi



The Fight Is Ours

Lalla Ben Barka is the Coordinator of the Women's Network of the African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (AALAE) and head of the Women's Program Division of the National Functional Literacy and Applied Linguistics Committee (DNAFLA) of Mali, West Africa. The following is part of a presentation that Lalla made at the recent AALAE conference on "The Future of Adult Education in Southern Africa."



Although illiteracy is high in French-speaking Africa--especially among women--the picture is not so bleak when we consider some recent positive developments. the governments in the region are increasing funds available for programs, new initiatives are being developed, and there has been progress in pedagogy and linguistics. AALAE's work has led to greater cooperation between countries, and has increased our awareness of the specific problems facing the region and potential solutions.

The development of national organizations to coordinate adult education activities is bound to strengthen the movement in Africa--and our enthusiasm. But we are cautious. Even though there are researchers, technicians and educators fighting for adult education, many problems still need to be tackled. By that I mean not only traditions, and economic and health problems, but also a lack of will on the part of the ruling class which does not want to encourage the emergence of certain social classes. Often, this elite is backed by a middle class which takes advantage of its administrative powers.

I cannot keep silent about the exploitation of one group by another: I'm talking about women, who have ridiculously little access to education. No one ignores this now. It has been so widely talked about that everyone--even the extreme conservatives--are starting to mention the need to educate women. Different theories and strategies have been developed, and new technologies have been introduced to alleviate women's chores and give them time to attend literacy classes. But these have other results. For example, carts have been introduced into the villages, and they have been handy in helping women to gather wood. But women say when they were gathering wood by hand they worked together and it was a time to share their secrets. Women have more free time, but unfortunately it has not been used to educate them. Instead, they are helping their husbands in the fields.

Then it was thought that the situation could be corrected by identifying and helping women to express their real needs. The new catch-phrase was "income-generating activities." Knitting and sewing here, soap-making and dyeing there, and "Why not grow some vegetables? It's healthy for the mother and the child." But the reality is different. In Africa women sometimes grow more than half of the cereal crops. But when it comes time to develop projects, women are not involved in the process. This is usually explained with the social argument: "We must not disrupt the community system, the traditions. That would generate a revolution, or worse, anarchy. We have to go slowly, step by step." Meanwhile there are more and more slogans.

Women's issues are fashionable. Creating a women's project is enough to get the attention of funders. Funders are interested because they want to justify their investments internationally. It looks good to have a project for women in your program. It looks good to subsidize a project aimed at improving women's lives.

But we are not fools. We are certainly interested in these opportunities. We want to grab them. But we do not want to be manipulated. What we are looking for is grassroots mobilization. Each woman in her own home needs to have time to stand back and think about her lot, and make decisions about her life and the life of her family. We want each woman to know that we stand behind her, whether she hides behind the veil, is confined in her kitchen, is imprisoned, or raises her children by herself. And that's why we as women--from Africa, Asia, North America, Europe and Latin America--we want to build up this solidarity so that our sisters, particularly those in South Africa and Namibia, do not feel isolated in their fight for freedom. The fight is ours and we shall win. God bless you.

Lalla Ben-Barka, DNAFLA-MEM
BP62
Bamako
Mali, West Africa

Making Our Voices Heard

SPEAK is a magazine for women produced by a women's collective in South Africa. The following article is based on discussions at a small meeting of women educators at the ICAE seminar in Zimbabwe in February 1989, where Karen Hurt of the SPEAK collective talked about their work.

I'm one person from a collective of seven women who together publish SPEAK, a magazine for women. Three of us are full-time employees and four of us are volunteers. We started SPEAK in 1982. At that time a women's group of activists from different areas and townships used to meet. They wanted to get together to talk about the problems they faced as women and the problems they were facing organizing women. From that group emerged the idea of a newsletter and the newsletter was called SPEAK. We printed 200 copies of our first issue and our target group was mainly women activists. Now we come out every two months and print 9000 copies. Our target is working-class women and men.

SPEAK is based on a very strong sense that women's issues have to be taken seriously within the broad democratic movement. Because we know that if they are not taken up now, and if people don't start addressing them, liberation will come and women will still be saying "The nation will never be free until the women are free." There's a sense that it is quite urgent to raise many issues, from women getting beaten up by their husbands to health issues. For example there's the fact that the highest cause of death among black women is cervical cancer, which is a curable disease if it is detected in the early stages. And the struggles of women in trade unions, the struggles against sexual harassment, and so many things



Sanna Naidoo

ranging from personal to very obviously political issues.

In the beginning all of us who were working on the magazine had full-time jobs and brought out SPEAK in our spare time. We found it quite hard because the demand for SPEAK was growing and members of the collective started to have children and more children and the time just shrunk. We reached a point where we realized if we were really going to make an impact we had to publish regularly, and we needed full-time people to get it out on time and distribute it properly.

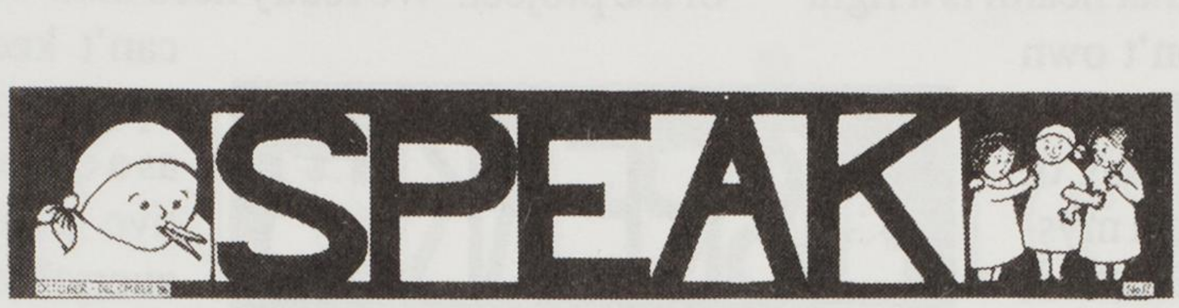
One of the problems of coming out so irregularly was that sometimes people would say, "Oh SPEAK is still around" in a surprised way. So we decided that SPEAK should be around much more. In 1986 we were eventually able to open an office and to employ two people. I was one of the first employees and then later that year another woman was employed as well. The composition of the collective is a cross-race one.

But there's a big problem with funding. We're so dependent on funding and the South African state would like to crush that funding. We live with quite a sense of insecurity.

Right from the outset we brought out SPEAK in Zulu and English. We wanted both to be as accessible as possible, the language simply written with lots of drawings and photographs that women could identify with. And short articles that women who have so little time to read anyway would it. Even women who can't read can find it interesting because there are lots of drawings and photos.

We put out the English and Zulu versions separately. It's like bringing out two issues every two months. And it is expensive. We've never really discussed putting English and Zulu into the same publication because there have been other publications brought out in that way and the response hasn't been that good. It's distracting having both languages, at least that's our feeling. Our project originated in Durban which is in Natal province, where English and Zulu are the main languages. We now have an office in Johannesburg and people are starting to say why don't you have it in other languages as well.

We think that as much as possible the ideas that come through SPEAK should be written in the way that women express them. Through interviews you



get how people speak. People get very excited when you go back to them and they read their words as they said them. I think SPEAK is accessible because it is conversational. But the other thing is that we've forced ourselves to learn to write simply. We've learned from people in the literacy world. They've evaluated SPEAK and pointed out so many obvious things. Our language has changed quite dramatically.

We have a very positive relationship with different unions in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In fact most of our distribution takes place through the unions and community organizations.

In terms of identifying the issues for our articles--we sell SPEAK at trade union and community meetings, particularly on the weekends when there are always a lot of meetings going on. We go to these meetings and we often pick up ideas. We know the people in the organizations, and we are always asking "Is there anything happening which we can write about?"

And of course over time you build up credibility and people support you and ask for the magazine. If we want to interview women in a particular union we go through the union structures, and once we've pulled an article together through interviews then we take it back to the organization we've been working with, for them to read before we publish it. I think that points out the difference between us and the commercial press. We see ourselves as accountable.

Because of where we are based, our focus has tended to be on urban communities and trade unions. We are very conscious of the fact that we don't have much information of interest to rural women, although we do try. It's difficult because it depends on who you are targetting and where your distribution is. We don't have the capacity at this stage to do extensive distribution in the rural areas, because of time and cost. We are still trying to consolidate our distribution in urban areas.

We don't send any free copies other than to the organizations with which we swap. We have one subscription rate for workers, unemployed and students and then higher donor subscriptions.

SPEAK includes different types of material. We're trying to encourage women to submit poetry, and that's taken off quite nicely. Women see poems by other women they know and they say, "I also write poetry." Another area is documenting women's personal

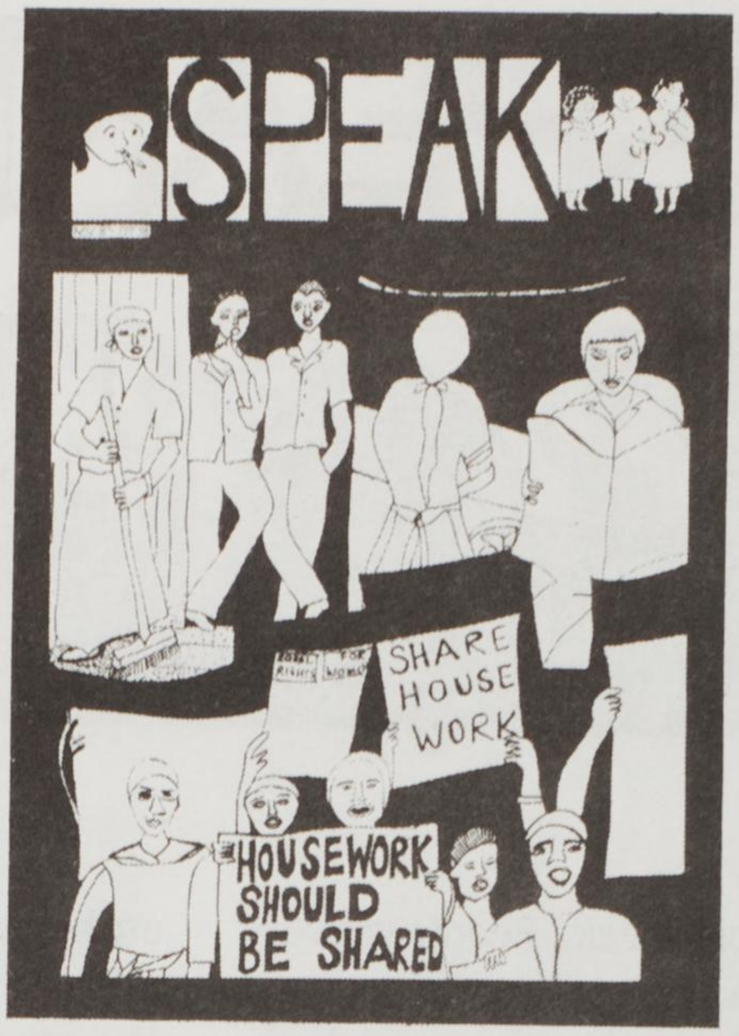
life stories, the kinds of problems that they've had, and their hopes for the future--what South African women would like to see in a future South Africa.

We also have a section on health which we see as an important part of empowerment, having knowledge about how women's bodies work. We want to promote a sense that health is a right and that doctors don't own your bodies and that you can understand so many of those things that are a mystery to you. We look at health provision in South Africa in relation to apartheid and in relation to a health system that is increasingly being privatized and put beyond the reach of people.

We've recently started an international section. Lots of intellectuals have books on women in Cuba and women in Nicaragua on their bookshelves. They get dusty and the information doesn't get out. Our idea is to link up South African women with women in other countries so that there is a sense of the struggles taking place everywhere. But it also hard writing about struggles in other countries because you feel as if you have to explain the whole context. In fact the women in other countries series has done quite well. Some of the unions have made copies, especially on Cuba and Mozambique, and use them in educational programs.

SPEAK is used quite a lot in schools and education programs. In fact I'm sure it's used much more than we actually know. We often bump into people and they say "By the way we used your health section" or some other piece.

Of course we've got lots of problems in SPEAK as well. We all try to be able to do everything, design, layout, writing and editing and distribution, although it is mainly the full-time employees who work at interviewing and working with groups and writing up stories. We started out with the sense that everybody must be able do everything but as SPEAK has grown--and now that we've got a new office office in Johannesburg as well as the original one in Durban--we're just not coping. There's chronic burnout. So we're going to do a serious evaluation of the project. We really need that. We can't keep operating as a collective where everything is shared because it's not a good use of your time and you miss your deadlines. And so we're having a big evaluation in February to look at how the collective can work together in the best possible way but also be productive and efficient. We have internal evaluations twice a year, in July and December. But for this major evaluation we feel that we need the skills of somebody who has had experience in organizations like ours but who has insights into management of projects, and who can look at our problems from the outside. Somebody who can help us sit down and say we're trying to achieve too much or we've got to change our method. We're sure that the evaluation will create a whole lot of trauma but we're quite committed to doing it.



The other thing that I wanted to mention is that SPEAK has a serious commitment to passing on and developing media skills to women outside of our group. We work with women's organizations. For example, the Natal Organization of Women have started a media group and SPEAK is spending time with them in a consistent way to develop media skills, from banner-making to badge-making, pamphlet writing and so on.

We believe that when you're part of a small collective you become very skilled yourselves, but one has to pass that on at some stage so that other women and organizations can learn and be able to be creative. And also we have helped with media skills training in some of the unions. We see that as an important part of our work.

SPEAK does not aim to organize women, we are not a mass-based women's organization. We see that as the role of the trade union movement and mass-based women's organizations. We see ourselves primarily as a grouping of people producing a publication. And while we're not directly affiliated to a particular women's group or trade union, our political allegiances are very clear in relation to the United Democratic Front (UDF) and COSATU. The one role that SPEAK does play in organizing is putting out pamphlets and that kind of thing. It's difficult, especially as volunteers are having less and less time. But that support media work is important. What happens if your doing an article with a group or trade union and there is a strike on? It's hard not to offer our skills when we see SPEAK's role as supporting those struggles.

SPEAK Collective
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127a Anderson St.
Johannesburg
South Africa

ranging from personal to very obviously political issues.

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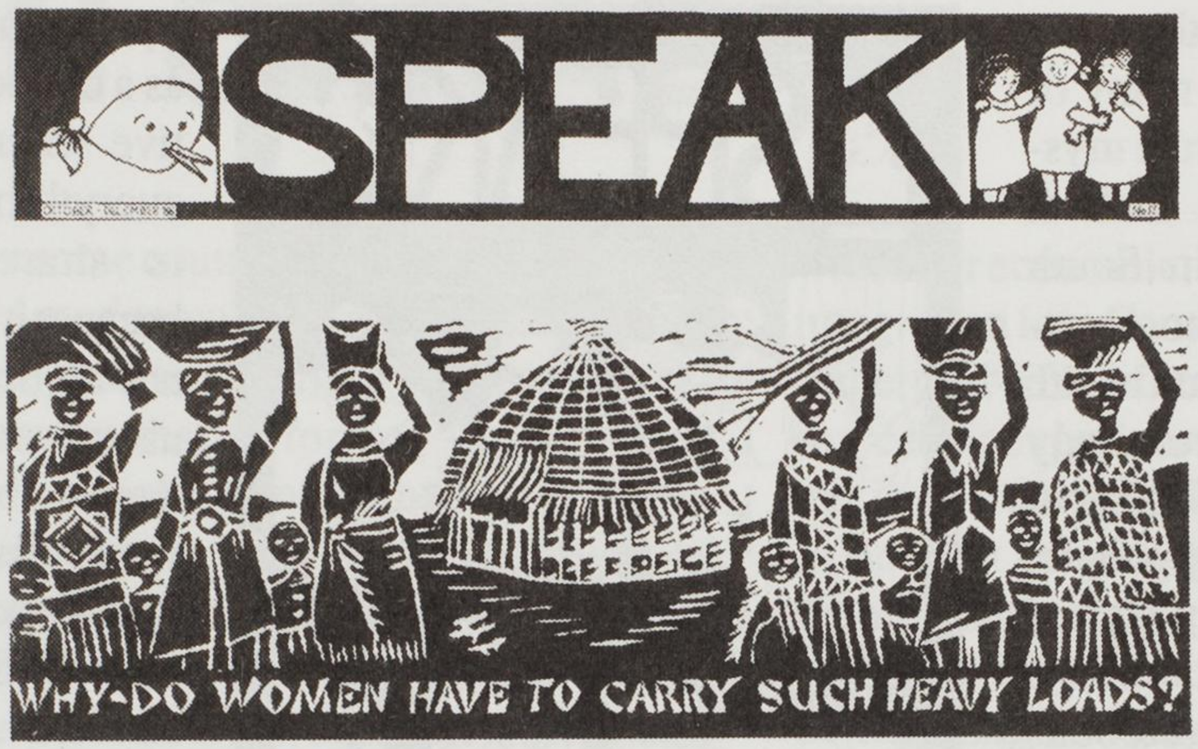
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But there's a big problem with funding. We're so dependent on funding and the South African state would like to crush that funding. We live with quite a sense of insecurity.

Right from the outset we brought out SPEAK in Zulu and English. We wanted both to be as accessible as possible, the language simply written with lots of drawings and photographs that women could identify with. And short articles that women who have so little time to read anyway would it. Even women who can't read can find it interesting because there are lots of drawings and photos.

We put out the English and Zulu versions separately. It's like bringing out two issues every two months. And it is expensive. We've never really discussed putting English and Zulu into the same publication because there have been other publications brought out in that way and the response hasn't been that good. It's distracting having both languages, at least that's our feeling. Our project originated in Durban which is in Natal province, where English and Zulu are the main languages. We now have an office in Johannesburg and people are starting to say why don't you have it in other languages as well.

We think that as much as possible the ideas that come through SPEAK should be written in the way that women express them. Through interviews you



get how people speak. People get very excited when you go back to them and they read their words as they said them. I think SPEAK is accessible because it is conversational. But the other thing is that we've forced ourselves to learn to write simply. We've learned from people in the literacy world. They've evaluated SPEAK and pointed out so many obvious things. Our language has changed quite dramatically.

We have a very positive relationship with different unions in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In fact most of our distribution takes place through the unions and community organizations.

In terms of identifying the issues for our articles--we sell SPEAK at trade union and community meetings, particularly on the weekends when there are always a lot of meetings going on. We go to these meetings and we often pick up ideas. We know the people in the organizations, and we are always asking "Is there anything happening which we can write about?"

And of course over time you build up credibility and people support you and ask for the magazine. If we want to interview women in a particular union we go through the union structures, and once we've pulled an article together through interviews then we take it back to the organization we've been working with, for them to read before we publish it. I think that points out the difference between us and the commercial press. We see ourselves as accountable.

Because of where we are based, our focus has tended to be on urban communities and trade unions. We are very conscious of the fact that we don't have much information of interest to rural women, although we do try. It's difficult because it depends on who you are targetting and where your distribution is. We don't have the capacity at this stage to do extensive distribution in the rural areas, because of time and cost. We are still trying to consolidate our distribution in urban areas.

We don't send any free copies other than to the organizations with which we swap. We have one subscription rate for workers, unemployed and students and then higher donor subscriptions.

SPEAK includes different types of material. We're trying to encourage women to submit poetry, and that's taken off quite nicely. Women see poems by other women they know and they say, "I also write poetry." Another area is documenting women's personal

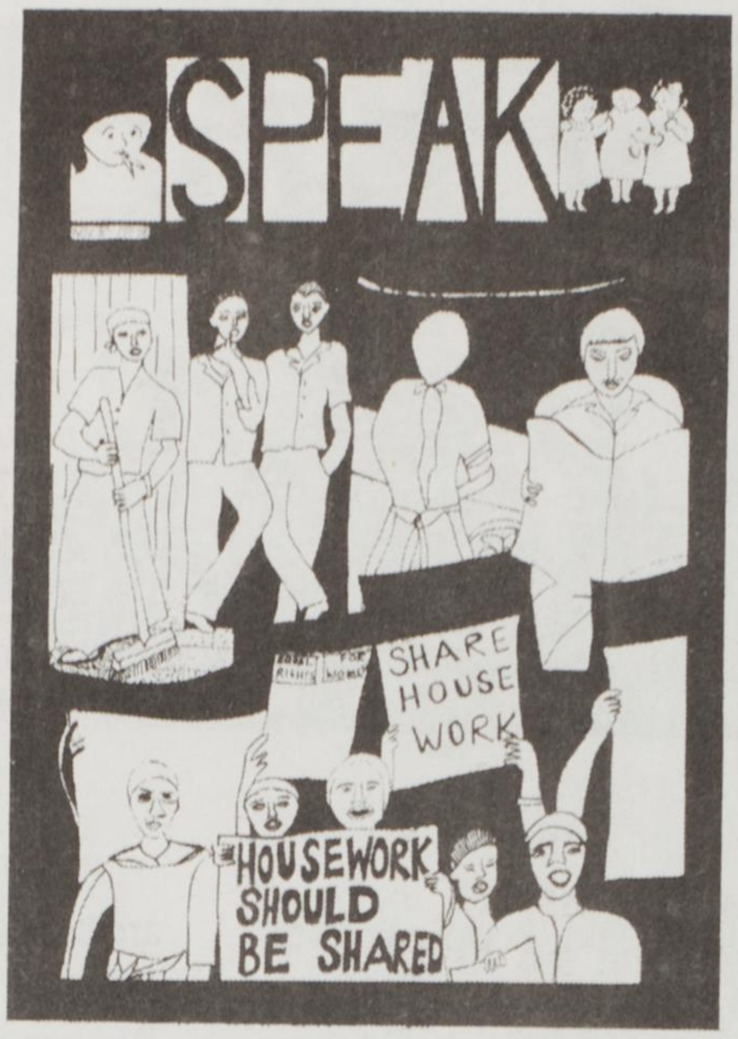
life stories, the kinds of problems that they've had, and their hopes for the future--what South African women would like to see in a future South Africa.

We also have a section on health which we see as an important part of empowerment, having knowledge about how women's bodies work. We want to promote a sense that health is a right and that doctors don't own your bodies and that you can understand so many of those things that are a mystery to you. We look at health provision in South Africa in relation to apartheid and in relation to a health system that is increasingly being privatized and put beyond the reach of people.

We've recently started an international section. Lots of intellectuals have books on women in Cuba and women in Nicaragua on their bookshelves. They get dusty and the information doesn't get out. Our idea is to link up South African women with women in other countries so that there is a sense of the struggles taking place everywhere. But it also hard writing about struggles in other countries because you feel as if you have to explain the whole context. In fact the women in other countries series has done quite well. Some of the unions have made copies, especially on Cuba and Mozambique, and use them in educational programs.

SPEAK is used quite a lot in schools and education programs. In fact I'm sure it's used much more than we actually know. We often bump into people and they say "By the way we used your health section" or some other piece.

Of course we've got lots of problems in SPEAK as well. We all try to be able to do everything, design, layout, writing and editing and distribution, although it is mainly the full-time employees who work at interviewing and working with groups and writing up stories. We started out with the sense that everybody must be able do everything but as SPEAK has grown--and now that we've got a new office office in Johannesburg as well as the original one in Durban--we're just not coping. There's chronic burnout. So we're going to do a serious evaluation of the project. We really need that. We can't keep operating as a collective where everything is shared because it's not a good use of your time and you miss your deadlines. And so we're having a big evaluation in February to look at how the collective can work together in the best possible way but also be productive and efficient. We have internal evaluations twice a year, in July and December. But for this major evaluation we feel that we need the skills of somebody who has had experience in organizations like ours but who has insights into management of projects, and who can look at our problems from the outside. Somebody who can help us sit down and say we're trying to achieve too much or we've got to change our method. We're sure that the evaluation will create a whole lot of trauma but we're quite committed to doing it.



The other thing that I wanted to mention is that SPEAK has a serious commitment to passing on and developing media skills to women outside of our group. We work with women's organizations. For example, the Natal Organization of Women have started a media group and SPEAK is spending time with them in a consistent way to develop media skills, from banner-making to badge-making, pamphlet writing and so on.

We believe that when you're part of a small collective you become very skilled yourselves, but one has to pass that on at some stage so that other women and organizations can learn and be able to be creative. And also we have helped with media skills training in some of the unions. We see that as an important part of our work.

SPEAK does not aim to organize women, we are not a mass-based women's organization. We see that as the role of the trade union movement and mass-based women's organizations. We see ourselves primarily as a grouping of people producing a publication. And while we're not directly affiliated to a particular women's group or trade union, our political allegiances are very clear in relation to the United Democratic Front (UDF) and COSATU. The one role that SPEAK does play in organizing is putting out pamphlets and that kind of thing. It's difficult, especially as volunteers are having less and less time. But that support media work is important. What happens if your doing an article with a group or trade union and there is a strike on? It's hard not to offer our skills when we see SPEAK's role as supporting those struggles.

SPEAK Collective
MGM House, 3rd Floor
127a Anderson St.
Johannesburg
South Africa

REFUGEE WOMEN IN CANADA

In recent years the Canadian government has passed legislation to severely restrict the number of refugees who can come into the country, and make it an offence for Canadians to help refugees enter Canada. New Experiences for Refugee Women (NEW) is a Toronto-based community organization that does educational work with Latin American refugees. This article is based on NEW's publications and on recent discussions Carol-Anne O'Brien of *Voices Rising* had with Mireya González, Noemi García and other members of NEW.

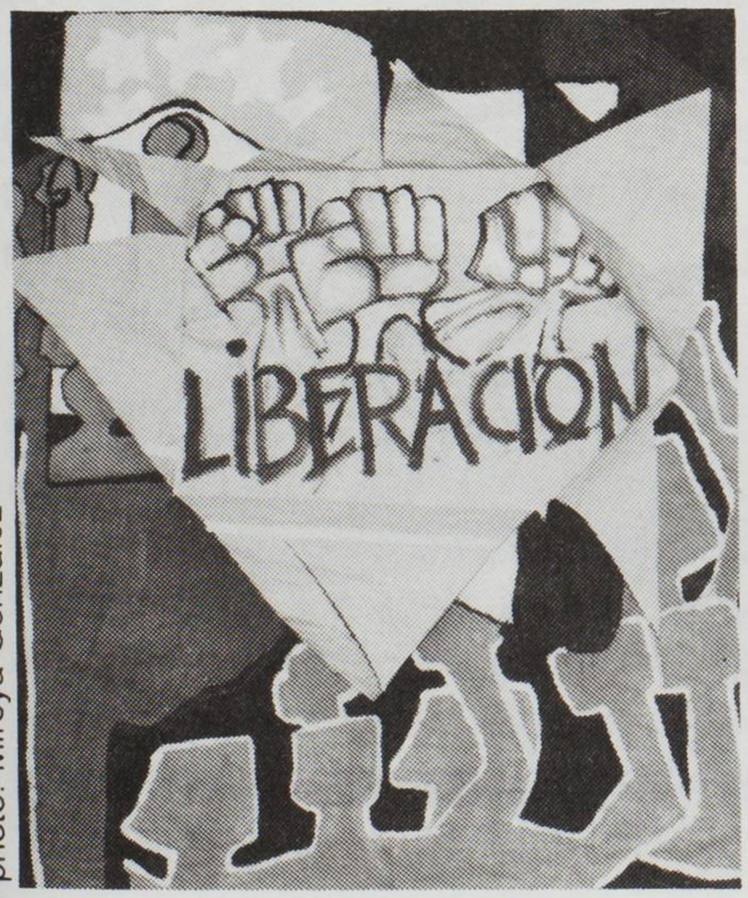


photo: Mireya González

In some countries of Central and South America, political and economic crises have resulted in brutal violence and repression that is forcing women, men and children to leave their homelands. Many have been seeking refuge in Canada, where language and cultural differences and discrimination isolate them from the rest of society. Although all who come experience difficulties as new immigrants, it is the women who have the greatest obstacles to overcome. Among them are mothers and widows who have been forced to leave their families behind or who are still coping with the shock of bereavement. Some are recovering from experiences of torture in prison. All of the women have come from unstable and violent situations.

In spite of this, refugee women bear the responsibility of holding their families together during the transition time, without the support of their community at home. Their traditional role as women is challenged by Canadian cultural expectations and by circumstances that force them to become the breadwinner or the sole parent. They must work but many do not speak English and their skills are not acknowledged by Canadian employers. Their access to English classes is limited by government regulations. All of these struggles are an incredible drain on their energies.

Founded in 1983, NEW's goal is to assist Latin American refugee women with their economic, social and cultural integration into Canada's multicultural society. NEW offers them a place to share their experiences and lose the fear that they are alone. NEW sees their role as not just providing information and training but a supportive environment.

A priority is to increase oral and written English language proficiency to allow participants to find and keep the jobs they desire and to communicate effectively in day-to-day situations. NEW also focusses on enabling participants to regain their confidence and self-esteem by providing the information, support and social skills necessary to take control of their lives. Another objective is to provide the women with individual support, counselling and referral to deal with personal and family problems and to facilitate their participation in NEW. NEW also works to enable Latin American refugee women to enter and function successfully in the Canadian labour force.

NEW is run by a board of community representatives and a staff collective composed of eight women, four full-time workers and four part-timers. Their work is complemented by about 25 volunteers who mainly help with English language training.

NEW is funded by the Canadian federal government under a special program for so-called "severely employment disadvantaged" people. NEW starts a training session with a new group of women every three to four

months. Participants go through a six month program--three months of training at NEW and then three months of on-the-job training at placements which NEW has found for them. Throughout the program the women recieve a salary--the legal minimum wage--as well as free passes for the public transit system and an allowance for new clothing for interviews.

NEW used to be able to accept 15 women in each session, but funds have been slowly reduced so that they can now accept only about 12-13. To be eligible under the government's criteria, participants must be unemployed or working less than 15 hours a week. The government also requires that participants have already been accepted as emigrants, which means that women who are in the midst of the long-drawn process of claiming offical "refugee status" cannot join NEW's program. Another cutback that the organization really regrets is that in the past they were able to cover the costs of daycare for the first part of the program. NEW doesn't receive those funds anymore and now they can only help women to find daycare and apply for government daycare subsidies.

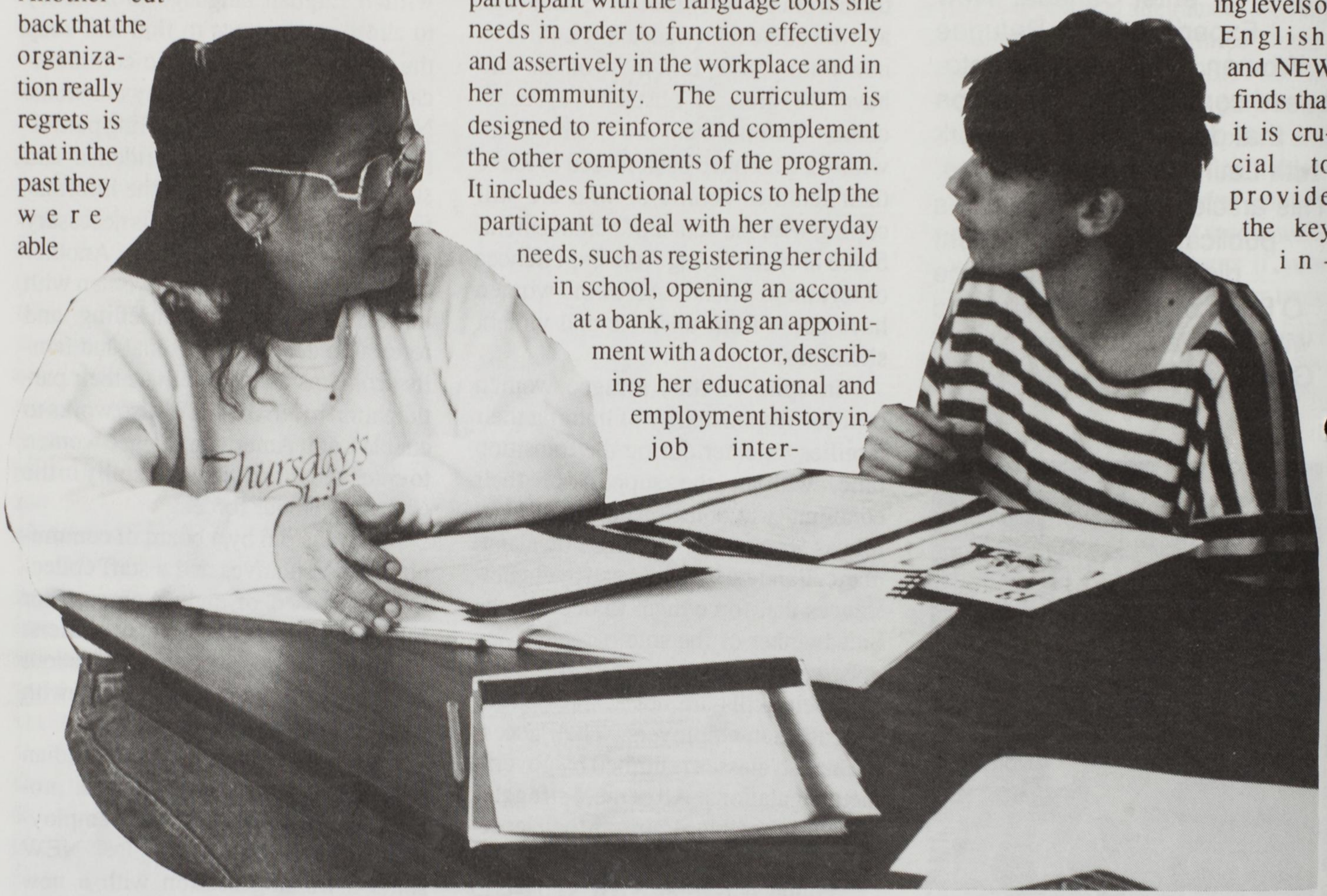
Participants hear about NEW through the centre's outreach to different communities and organizations in Toronto. Most of the women are originally from from El Salvador and Guatemala, but some also come from South American countries like Argentina, Chile and Bolivia. The women come from varied backgrounds and have different skills and work experiences.

The first three months of the training program consists of English, orientation and information, employment preparation and vocational counselling, and personal counselling and referrals. The English language classes are held every morning and aim to provide each participant with the language tools she needs in order to function effectively and assertively in the workplace and in her community. The curriculum is designed to reinforce and complement the other components of the program. It includes functional topics to help the participant to deal with her everyday needs, such as registering her child in school, opening an account at a bank, making an appointment with a doctor, describing her educational and employment history in job interviews, and developing strategies to deal with breakdowns in communication, for example at work.

Language-experience exercises are used to improve skills in English by focussing on material that the women themselves have generated from their own lives and ideas. Films, music, and newspaper articles are often used as catalysts for discussion, and on many occasions the debates are lively and valuable.

Increasing their skills in English can be a first step forward in helping the women to be more independent so they don't have to rely on their husbands and children to translate or speak English for them. Gaining language skills also motivates the women to take on other challenges.

The other components of the training program are taught in Spanish. The participants often have widely differing levels of English, and NEW finds that it is crucial to provide the key in-



formation in the employment preparation, vocational counselling and orientation classes in the women's mother tongue--to ensure that they can understand.

The employment preparation component of the program provides the participants with the tools they need to survive in the Canadian workforce, for example information about labour laws and their rights as workers. Skills in self-evaluation are introduced--identifying abilities and goals--and setting long and short-term goals.

This forms the basis for vocational counselling--individually and as a group. The staff work with each participant to draw up an action-plan to help her move systematically towards her goals. Many of the women were highly qualified in their home countries, as nurses, for example. But in order to take up those kinds of professions in Canada they need to pass licensing exams in English. So NEW encourages participants to set themselves short-term goals --such as learning English, settling their families or improving their financial situation--and long-term goals, which may involve passing licensing exams or taking training in a new area they are interested in.

The orientation program aims to provide the women with self-confidence in each area of their lives: as women, as wives, as mothers and as workers by using life-skills exercises to empower them to take on their responsibilities. The workshops also include health education, including sexuality, and Canada's history, geography, education system and immigration regulations.

Following the classroom training at NEW, each participant is found a placement for on-the-job training. This offers her the opportunity to experience the Canadian work environment and learn about a job she's interested in. Examples of the placements are offices, daycare centres, and stores. NEW tries to find placements in workplaces where there is some hope that the trainees will be taken on as permanent employees. They also look for employers who are open to working with refugee women and providing them with a supportive work environment. During the job training period, the participants come back to NEW once a month to share their experiences, evaluate what they are learning and help NEW to monitor their placements. NEW also goes to each workplace and does an in-house evaluation with the participant and the employer.

At the end of the 26-week program there is a graduation ceremony for the participants, who are presented with diplomas from the Board of Education and NEW. NEW is proud that their record has been very successful; 80-85 percent of the participants find jobs at the end of the program.

In every aspect of their work NEW's educational approach draws on popular education and group dynamics to ensure that the training program is participatory and empowering. An important focus is that the participants are encouraged to organize themselves as a group. Collective games are used help the women to get to know each other and to encourage them to explore their creativity. They learn what it means to work as a group, they share their experiences, and they support each other throughout the program, in their efforts to find work and in the challenges that face them in their jobs and at home. Most groups have continued to stay in touch with each other and some meet together from time to time. After all the experiences they've been through, most of the women value their family as the most important thing in their lives, and as a vital place to share and be renewed by their own culture. It's a very special achievement that the participants come to see NEW as an extension of their families and their cultural life.

New Experiences for Refugee Women
815 Danforth Avenue, Suite 406
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M4J 1L2

J. Roby Kidd Award

Mohamed Lamine Bangoura of Guinea, West Africa, has been selected as winner of the ICAE's 1988 J. Roby Kidd Award. Mr. Bangoura received the award for his important contribution to functional literacy for women through the project he carried out for the "Cameroun Women's Literacy Centre." Mr. Bangoura was a literacy facilitator for a training and literacy project started on a small scale with 30 women from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Because of its success, this model will be used in 35 other locales throughout Guinea.

Two other educators received Citations of Honour. Nishat Farooq has worked for the past six years in the State Resource Centre in Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, India, preparing teaching and learning materials for adult illiterates. Tawfeez Hasan Tillawee, a Jordanian, has been working to eliminate illiteracy and to promote adult education for the past 25 years in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Roby Kidd had a special interest in attracting new people with new ideas to adult education. The aim of this Award is to encourage practioners in adult education by recognizing contributions of women and men which are recent and innovative. The Cdn$2,000 Award is offered to an individual or individuals, who in the opinion of peers, have made a particularly significant contribution to adult education at the local or national level.

The Women's Program would like to encourage women in the network to nominate women's educational groups or individual women educators and activists for the Award. The deadline each year is October 15th. Send names to:

J. Roby Kidd Award
ICAE
720 Bathurst St., Suite 500
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5S 2R4.

Linking

Leadership Training and Consciousness Raising among Chicana Workers in the US

Kathy Kopinak

SINCE 1982, La Mujer Obrera (Working Woman) has been the principal project of El Centro Del Obrero Fronterizo (The Border Workers' Centre) in El Paso, a Texas city located on the Mexico-US border. Arising in 1976, Centro Obrero was an organization formed by Chicano (Mexican-American) workers and students to support their people's struggles. Its members were part of the Chicano movement, the most recently organized resistance that Americans of Mexican origin have raised to their colonization within the United States. El Paso is part of one of the poorest regions of the US. Legislation guaranteeing workers the "right to work" has kept unions very weak, so that wages, health and safety provisions, and job security won by workers in other parts of the world are unknown here. Neither has the government developed welfare measures which would redistribute wealth in order to guarantee a minimum standard of living.



Puerto Rico Libre

The historically depressed situation of workers in Texas has become even more precarious since 1966, when an export processing zone was formed on the south side of the Mexico-US border. In urban complexes such as El Paso (US) and Juarez (Mexico) a system of "twin plants" has arisen, in which companies producing garments and electronic equipment maintain the smallest possible facilities in the US side of the border, while moving as much production as possible to the Mexican side, where wages are eight times less. Those paid the lowest wages on both sides of the border are Spanish-speaking women.

Cecilia Rodriguez and Pat Marin were among the founding members of Centro Obrero in 1976 when it opened to help people in Segundo Barrio (Second Ward) with, for example, unemployment claims, housing evictions and immigration difficulties. This city ward in El Paso has always been the poorest and has acted as a receiving area for Mexican immigrants. Employers have used it as a source of plentiful, cheap, unorganized labour. When it became clear that most of the Centro's clients were Segundo Barrio women who worked in small non-union sweatshops, Rodriguez, Marin and some of the other founding members directed most of their energies to them, thereby forming La Mujer Obrera in 1982.

The empowerment of women workers was initially conceived as a process whereby they could gain greater control over their workplace, union and family. The three areas of focus when La Mujer Obrera started were: 1) service--to respond to workers' immediate economic needs; 2) leadership development--to assist women in dealing with their triple oppression as workers,

women and Chicanas; and 3) organization--workers' strength would come from their membership in an organized group.

As the director of La Mujer Obrera, Rodriguez is not interested in simply paying lip service to the idea of leadership development without first making it clear that it requires time, experience and growth. She recognizes that this is a slowly accumulating process which cannot be achieved through linear strategies for mobilizing "masses" into the streets. The development of leadership among women of colour must first be based on a profound respect for culture. Neither can leadership and assertiveness training be accomplished apart from the other political goals of the organization.

An example of this practical integration was the English language training project of 1984, in which language education was provided as a service which allowed members to improve their skills to cope specifically with workplace pressures. Students learned repertoires which gave them some of the initiative in shop floor interactions with supervisors, for example words, phrases, tone of voice and delivery styles that indicated that piece work was not being properly administered by the factory or that the worker did not want to work overtime. The completion of this class was especially celebrated since students attended after a full working day and the teacher was a volunteer.

The centre also implemented its set of goals around leadership and assertiveness training through consciousness raising in workshops and conferences. As early as 1982, they developed educational materials which focussed on the role of sexual discrimination in the workplace, the economic manifestations of sexism, revaluing domestic labour, and the problematic aspects of women's relationships with men. La Mujer Obrera, along with other organizations, held educational forums on models of parenting in 1982 and conferences on child abuse in 1983. In 1986, they jointly organized the first International Women's Day Conference for Mexican women and Chicanas in the Rio Grande Valley. They held workshops on immigration, health care, child abuse and parenting.

This kind of consciousness raising has become an ongoing part of the Centre's activities, but the magnitude of this achievement should not be underestimated by the brevity of this article. Those facilitating the consciousness raising had to develop their own Spanish language materials, revaluing their Mexican heritage. This was made more difficult by both the racism of some white feminists and the accusation of the part of some Chicanos that the identification of Chicanas primarily as women is divisive and a sign of being sold out.

The very organizational structure of La Mujer Obrera also facilitated the development of leadership skills. From the beginning of the project, the emphasis has been on a collective approach to problem solving so that dependency on the Centre and its personnel is not perpetuated. Members are employed in several different sweatshops and make their workplace concerns central to their activities on the committees of the Centre. This intense membership involvement has been reflected in the content of the newsletter, in articles containing information relevant to ongoing conflicts with factory owners. When workers suspected that they were not getting paid for all of the piece work they had completed, articles appeared showing how they could keep a daily record of the amount produced. In this way, they learned how to collect evidence to prove they were being underpaid. In the same issue were biographies of El Paso garment workers who had persevered and transcended great obstacles. A featured column includes personal accounts of the life experiences of contemporary workers which helps the reader understand that her problems are not only her



Correspondencia, Mexico

own, but also shared by many other Chicanas.

Over the last seven years, La Mujer Obrera has moved forward with great care, providing services and giving support with problems identified by the membership. When Pat Marin and Cecilia Rodriguez began, they realized that if non-unionized garment workers were to organize themselves, they would need support. The low wages of $70-80 per week simply do not give the workers the resources to start building their own organizations. Thus the Centre opened as a multipurpose service agency, offering English language classes, referrals to other social agencies and legal services.

La Mujer Obrera set up Independent Worker Committees in any factory where they had sufficient members. When workers in one factory went on a spontaneous strike in September of 1985, La Mujer Obrera helped them to represent themselves and structured the Independent Worker Committees into an independent association of garment workers. After this strike, the workers won several Labour Board rulings, securing unemployment benefits and back pay that the factory owners tried to deny them.

In this way, the Centre has developed from an organization which used to spend much time satisfying workers' immediate needs, to one which is now run by the workers themselves. Some of those who received services in the early days of the organization and who participated in leadership training and consciousness raising were most active in the strike and organization of 1985. They are now the ones who run La Mujer Obrera. This had freed up some of Rodriguez's time to do more political work. Marin is in the process of implementing a language education and reskilling program for displaced workers at El Paso Community College.

The long-range goal of La Mujer Obrera is the development of a self-sufficient leadership training centre which will provide supportive services and activities for low-income working women. Efforts to build this centre have been fraught with difficulties because of the organization's lack of capital and the general poverty of the community. This is the case even though they have been politically successful, with an ever increasing membership and recognition from the larger community as a leading organization through which workers attempt to cope with the deepening economic crisis. At the time of writing this article, they continue working towards this goal.

Kathy Kopinak is a sociologist at King's College, University of Western Ontario, Canada. This article is part of a larger work on women organizing on the Mexican-American border. You can write to the Centre at :

La Mujer Obrera
P.O. Box 3975
El Paso, Texas 79923
USA.

1988 Nabila Breir Award

A project entitled "Training and Participation of Village Women in Pre-School Education" is the 1988 recipient of the Nabila Breir Award. This West Bank-based programme provides for village women from all-women committees and other voluntary networks to become involved and trained, from a self-help perspective, to take charge of services for pre-school education and upgrade their quality. This is done through:

1. The training of pre-school supervisors and teacher-trainers according to Piaget's principle of cognitive development. The supervisors are developing the philosophy and practice of pre-school teachers through an interactive approach, where the supervisor's role is to support and facilitate the teacher's efforts to develop her professional and personal philosophy as well as her competence.
2. Education and curriculum materials for pre-school teacher training are being developed and produced as an integral part of the training process.

The Nabila Breir Award was established by the ICAE in 1987 in memory of Nabila Breir, a Palestinian activist who was murdered in Beirut. Nabila was an educator who worked with UNICEF and had played a key role in setting up daycare centres, literacy classes and health care clinics in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon. She had also been active in the ICAE.

Following Nabila's death, a fund was set up for a yearly award that recognizes organizations doing innovative educational work for Palestinian women. The objectives of the award are: to support women's educational programmes aimed at enhancing the socio-economic development of Palestinian communities, and the quality of life and self-sufficiency of women in particular; to provide opportunities for Palestinian women grassroots educators to exchange educational experiences with women educators from other regions; and to provide opportunities for Palestinian women educators to participate in ICAE's regional and international workshops, seminars and conferences.

Women's and other educational organizations are encouraged to submit nominations to the ICAE, giving a brief history and description of the organization. Nominations should be received by July 1st of each year, and selections are made in October. Send nominations to:

ICAE
720 Bathurst St., Suite 500
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5S 2R4

Letters from the Network

Belize

Thank you for the copy of *Voices Rising*. We will be very happy to set up an exchange of our publications.

Please also find enclosed a leaflet describing SPEAR. Although we do not have a specific women's programme, in addition to my responsibility as co-ordinator of the popular education programme, I am responsible for ensuring that the organization addresses women's issues. At present, we are collaborating with two sister non-governmental organizations in setting up and conducting education programmes with the women's groups that they are working with. At the same time we work closely with the Belize Organization for Women and Development (BOWAND) of which I am the current president.

I read the issue of *Voices Rising* with great pleasure and look forward to future issues! One of the interesting things for me was that I knew a couple of the women and although we are not always in touch it was good to read more about them and what they were doing in addition to learning more about what other sister popular educators were



saying and doing. Although I did not attend the workshop [Montreal, November, 1987] on which the issue focussed, I got a very good sense of it. I particularly liked the style of the many voices rising in the boxes. I think it highlights the strength in diversity.

I particularly want to endorse the concern raised about the absence of women of colour from the United States. This to my mind has been one of the biggest failings in international women's fora. Third World women have never been given much of an opportunity to interact with women like ourselves from Europe and North America, and while I understand the problem of getting funds for the sisters, I see it as an important challenge to the feminist movement.

I also find the resource section very useful. We need to know what materials exist, what materials are being developed and how to access them.

I look forward to hearing from you and staying in touch.

One Struggle,

Diane Haylock
Society for the Promotion of Education and Research (SPEAR)
P.O. Box 571
126 North Front Street
Belize City
Belize, Central America.

Malaysia

Thank you for sending us a copy of *Voices Rising*. We would like to receive it on a regular basis as there is much that we can learn from the experiences of other women. Reading the article on the Gregoria Apaza Centre in Bolivia [January 1989 issue] reminded us that we have a long way to go in Sarawak. Our work is only in its infancy. There is much to do and learn.

We were formed in 1985 and currently run a crisis phoneline for women in distress. We also have a resource centre for our members where they can get access to information and materials on a variety of women's issues.

As we enter into our fourth year, we are now evaluating our work and hope to formulate an outreach programme in

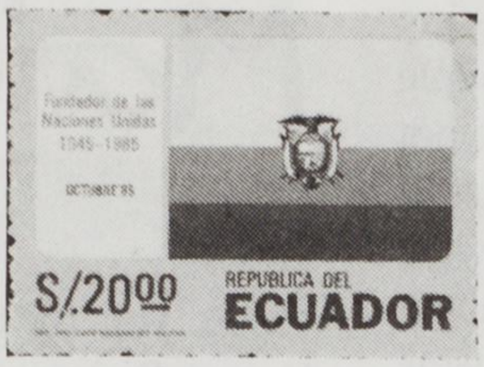
our community. We do not have any full-time staff, thus our time and energies are often very badly stretched. In spite of this our commitment and enthusiasm is high. We hope that *Voices Rising* will continue as an avenue where women can share with each other and we hope to learn much from it.

In solidarity,

Sarawak Women for Women Society
P.O. Box 551
Kuching, Sarawak
Malaysia

Ecuador

It was very nice for us to receive such a valuable package in the mail. The two newsletters arrived January 24, and on Saturday 28 we met in Esmeraldas, and the next day in Atacames. We wanted to discuss in a participatory fashion the message you sent us, dear sister, through *Voces que se levantan (Voices Rising).*



The problem is that we cannot pay for a subscription because we are planning the closing ceremony of the sewing course we give, and we have to spend our money on diplomas and refreshments. After that we are planning to do training for vegetable growing. We are promoting your newsletter and in March we will tell you how many we need. Meanwhile I want to let you know what our sisters of the Centre said, "Answer soon, Adalfina. We are going to send a picture of our group, we want to go in a photo to Canada." Another women was so touched she told me, "I never thought they would pay attention to us in the (Quito) seminar." The three sisters from Atacames, I can't tell you how touched they were, so much that they want to work all winter to send their report to Canada. I think that you are planting a seed that is going to give excellent harvests. The fact that you sent us the newsletters without charge demonstrates the dynamics of your work and will undoubtedly generate follow-up which will be of benefit to many people and organizations.

For 1989 we are planning to grow vegetables and fruit. In our province, basic staples are scarce and prices are rising, and there is unemployment with all its effects on poor people. So we have decided to concentrate our energies on training in growing vegetables, crafts and nutrition.

In the first page of *Voces que se levantan* there is that article under the title "Sharing our Spirit" (April 1988). I think that the sister who wrote it has, inside herself, a piece of each one of us, because all of us are going through difficult moments in our intimate lives. Not all of us have the understanding of our loved ones when we want to give part of our time to search for solutions for people with serious problems. We don't have friendly help in advising, planning, smiling. Of course we are often alone. In spite of having husbands, children, groups that we organized, there are moments we stand alone and over and over we have to fight against that solitude.



Today, when your mail arrived, my husband said, "You must answer quickly. This doesn't happen everyday, receiving newsletters from Canada." So what do you think sisters, for eight years this man didn't want me to do popular training, and now he's not opposed anymore.

We wish the bulletin every success, and thanks again for including us on the subscription list.

Adalfina Ortiz
Centro Femenino Progresista de Esmeraldas
[Esmeraldas Progressive Women's Centre]
Quito 506 y 6 de Diciembre
Esmeraldas
Ecuador

❖ ❖ ❖

Sincere and warm greetings, from all the women of the Popular Education Centre, from the women of Ecuador and, especially from the suburban working women of Guayaquil.

Because of a mail strike, we have had difficulties with communications. Sorry we couldn't write before.

Thanks for the visit to our centre (during the Quito seminar.) It helped to open new roads in women's organization, to share experiences and to discuss the women's issues around the world.

We also want to thank you for your letter and the explanations about the Women's Program's goals and work. We think it is very positive for us to know each other better so we can strengthen international solidarity and unity among women.

It was nice also to receive *Voces que se levantan* . We think it is an efficient means for sharing, analyzing and discussing popular education in the context of women's struggle for social change, and for the sharing of experiences.

Eva Caicedo
Women's group
Centro de Educacion Popular Guayas (CEP)
[Guayas Popular Education Centre]
Casilla 11146
Guayaquil
Ecuador



Anguilla

I have read Voices Rising and have found it very interesting and I would certainly like you to send me a copy on a regular basis. It would be means of putting us in touch with other women's groups in different parts of the world.

It would seem as whether we are First or Third World women we seem to have similar problems, women struggling for equality.

My group is the National Council of Women and is the "umbrella" organization whose members are drawn from representatives of the various women's organizations on the island, as well as women not attached to specific groups. The main goals of the National Council are to ensure full participation and integration of women in the building of our nation, and to establish closer ties with all women in Anguilla.

We feel it is only through closer ties and cooperation that we can achieve our objectives and ensure the full participation of our women. I would like very much to be part of your network. I would also like to share information and gain experience from other women's groups around the world. In my next letter I will be able to give you some news and activities of the group.

Best wishes,

Miriam Gumbs
Back Street
South Hill
Anguilla
Caribbean



Philippines

We are very much grateful for sending us a copy of Voices Rising. We are glad about the work the ICAE is doing. We are highly spirited to hear about it, as we believe that it is high time that broad links should be established among NGOs who work for the uplift of marginalized/exploited peoples through popular education. Furthermore, the problems (poverty, ill health, poor housing and so forth) besetting the Filipino workers, including women who are intertwined with other exploited people in the Third World and that of the transnational corporations who shamelessly suck the blood of our people in the guise of progress and free trade.

We would be more than happy if you would provide us with some information about the ICAE as our concentration is on workers' education and

health where the majority of our beneficiaries are women workers and workers' wives.

Thank you for including us on your mailing list. With best wishes for your continued success.

In solidarity,

Napoleon Genato
Program Director
St. Joseph Social Services
Room 205 Pelbel Building
2019 Shaw Boulevard
Pasig
Philippines



Thank you very much for sending a copy of Voices Rising. It is very educational. I translate some of your articles into the Filipino language and publish them in our quarterly magazine in Filipino. I must thank you for these educational articles.

Our organization will be ten years old in 1990. We have 16,700 active members from the 13 towns and 4 cities of Metro Manila, and 8 provinces around the Philippines. We meet every month with 200 members of the executive board who monitor for the central leadership the monthly activities.

We have only two goals: non-formal education and livelihood programs for the members. We are a service organization, we serve our members.

To implement the non-formal education program we hold ten training seminars a month in Metro Manila. We are able to reach at least 5,000 women yearly through these training seminars. We teach home management, herbal medicine, consumer and nutrition education, Philippines history and culture, cooking nutritious but inexpensive foods, etc. We also distribute herbal plants. To date we have distributed for free 15,000 herbal plants. We have already set up a herbal garden where we grow and propagate herbal seedlings for distribution. We also hold cooking sessions with the wives of foreign diplomats who teach us how to cook their food. We also have study tours of places of interest and history throughout the country. Thrice a year, we invite foreign diplomats to lecture us about their country. We also hold annual concerts on Philippine art and music.

Thank you again and we look forward to another copy of Voices Rising.

Sincerely yours,

Leonarda N. Camacho
Metro Manila Council of Women
Balikatan Movement
82-A Midland 11
Washington Street
Greenhills West
San Juan, Metro Manila
Philippines

Ethiopia

Thank you for your letter and *Voices Rising*. I regret that I had much work that hindered my answering your letter immediately.

I found the *Voices Rising* bulletin to have valuable experiences taken from all corners of the world. The bulletin initiates women and democratic educators to struggle for the betterment of women's world and make a conducive milieu for them. Voices Rising is a real mouthpiece of women at the world level.



My work is preparing cooperative education materials for literacy and post-literacy. Besides this I engage in adult education research. In our literacy campaign the majority of participants are women. Generally my work relates with women and *Voices Rising* is useful for my task.

International Literacy Year 1990 prepares the world community at large for a holy work. This holy work is an initiation to wage a practical war against illiteracy so as to reduce it to a very few percentage by the year 2000.

Really illiteracy has to be combatted because: it is the enemy of the people, it is darkness, it makes people unreceptive to new ideas and change, it hinders development, it exposes people to brutal exploitation and oppression, and it is also an obstacle to people participating fully in economic, social and cultural activities.

Briefly illiteracy is everything of all evil things. It could be eradicated by the combined efforts of the world, governmental and non-governmental organizations, internationally, regionally as well as nationally.

Sincerely yours,

Beyene Abraha
Department of Adult Education
P.O. Box 4921
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Senegal

I am a university student. I am of Peul origin and my father, who is polygamous, has three wives and about 30 children. I left my hometown when I was two years old to live with one of my aunts who was childless, and would go back to my village for the holidays.

When I read your magazine *A pleine voix [Voices Rising]* at a friend's house, I could not believe it. For a long time I have been deeply involved in women's movements, mostly to rebel against what my mother was going through in my family. She is oppressed, exploited, obedient, exhausted, as are all women in my country. Because the worst aspects of traditional society and Islam have been retained, the fate of Peul women is the saddest in Senegal, worse than the Woolofs, for example.

I was president of the Women's Board in my high school. However, the administration expelled me from the school because they felt I was preaching revolutionary ideas to the female students. My father claimed my mother was my accomplice even though she lived far away, and my mother and I had no place to go. I felt even more rebellious. I looked after children while taking evening classes and I graduated from high school.

At the moment, I am pursuing my education without a scholarship and without any help from my father, who thinks I am a pariah. Needless to say, my state is precarious. Last year, I spent almost all my free time with the women of my hometown. I did research on the need to liberate women economically and I organized debates on family planning. In spite of tremendous difficulties of lack of money or help of any kind, we even formed a group for women who were interested in sewing, dyeing material, weaving and embroidery.

This was a brief account of my aims and objectives. I do not think I can do much to free women as long as I am myself oppressed and dominated. I have a haunting problem, a sorrow which lies deep in my inner self. I was excised and married against my will at 15. For the first time in my life, something gives me hope, something interests me.

God bless women's groups. Let's gather our efforts for our freedom. Let's fight for freedom all the way.

All my love,

[name witheld]
Dakar
Senegal

Africa Exchange Project

In January of this year the Women's Program and the Women's Network of the African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (AALAE) co-sponsored a Women's Exchange Project in Harare, Zimbabwe, which brought together about 60 women (and a few men), from the networks of the ICAE and AALAE and from women's groups in and around the city. It took place during the executive meetings of the ICAE and AALAE and a conference organized by AALAE, on "The Future of Adult Education in Southern Africa", all of which took place in Harare.

The program included a reception for women educators and a fruitful day of discussion and exploration with presentations on the situation of women and women's education in Malaysia, Ecuador, the Gambia and Zimbabwe, followed by study visits with community projects in Harare. While very short, the exchange made it possible for women to share their experiences in working with women and their personal stories of struggle against oppression.

The exchange in Zimbabwe was the first phase of a longer international exchange project which will take place in November 1989 involving fifteen women working in the areas of literacy and health education, who will travel to meet with women in Mali and Tanzania. The participants will come from Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Latin America, North America, Europe and other countries in Africa.

Exchanges of this kind have been identified by women educators and activists as useful and important experiences for women who are actively working at the grassroots. Women who attended the leadership development seminar in Ecuador, last October, and others who were at the Feminist Challenge seminar held in Montreal, in October, 1987, identified opportunities to exchange with women in other regions as key to strengthening mutual support and the development of networks within and between regions. For more information about the exchanges, write to us at the Women's Program office in Toronto.

Resources

Growing Together: Women, Feminism and Popular Education

Women's Network, Latin American Council for Adult Education (CEAAL) and Isis International, Rome, Italy 1988. 94pp.

This valuable book is a collection of articles by Latin American women active in popular education. It includes articles on CEAAL's Women's Network, on feminism and popular education and on popular education practice in Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela. Originally published in Spanish, this translation offers English-speaking audiences the opportunity to learn about the innovative work in Latin America in developing a vision and practice in popular education by and for women. As the introduction points out, "people's movements everywhere are finding that education is a crucial component of attempts to empower disenfranchised groups." Feminists and women's groups have begun to carry the struggle for women's empowerment into the popular education movement, developing a critique of existing popular education efforts and creating positive alternatives that explore the hidden realities of women's lives, and develop new visions of the concrete demands and organizational forms that best express women's needs.

Cost: US$6.00.
Available from: Isis International, Via San Saba 5, 00153 Rome, Italy.



Come Together. An Action Pack for Campaign on Legal Reforms for Women in Malaysia

All Women's Action Society (AWAM), Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.

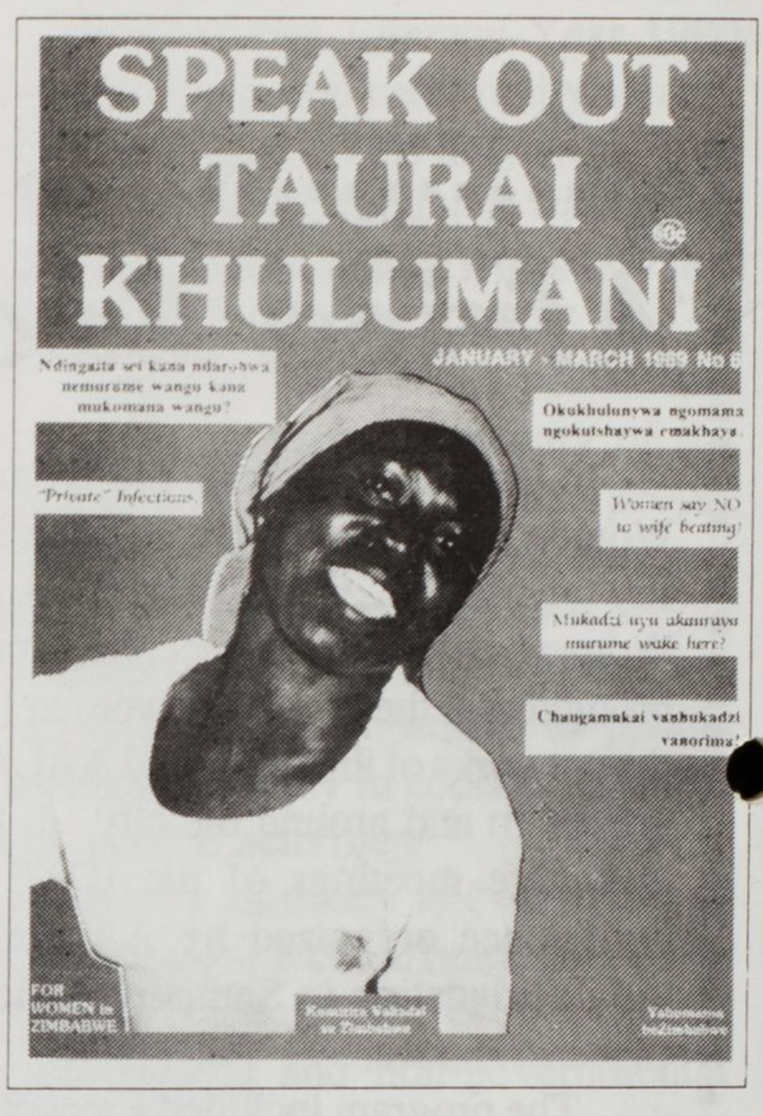
This kit aims to build awareness among women and women's groups about how women are discriminated against, develop analytical skills necessary for a critical understanding of the issues, motivate women and women's groups to act for change, and strengthen the campaign for legal reforms in Malaysia. The kit has two sections; one is composed of four illustated popular education booklets: Women and Work (16pp), Women and Family Law (16pp), Rape/ Sexual Assault (19pp), and Domestic Violence: Women Battering (12pp). The other section of the kit includes a Users' Guide and Tools for Action, leaflets which take off from the issues raised in the booklets and suggest ways to develop collective action.

Available from: All Women's Action Society (AWAM), c/o 114 Jalan SS 4/10, 43701 Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.

SPEAK OUT

SPEAK OUT/TAURAI/KHULAMANI magazine is produced by the Women's Action Group in Zimbabwe, and comes out four times a year. In each issue the articles are published in English and two Zimbabwean languages, Shona and Ndebele. A recent issue focusses on violence against women and includes articles and a comic-strip about women who are being beaten by their husbands, on sexual harassment at work, and advice on how to get help. The issue also features an interview with the coordinator of the women's programme of the National Farmers Association who talks about her life, and a summary of a report on women in the cooperative movement in Zimbabwe.

Subscriptions: (Four issues/year) Other African countries US$10.00; Europe US$15.00; Asia US$17.00; elsewhere US$20.00.
Available from: SPEAK OUT, Box 135, Harare, Zimbabwe.



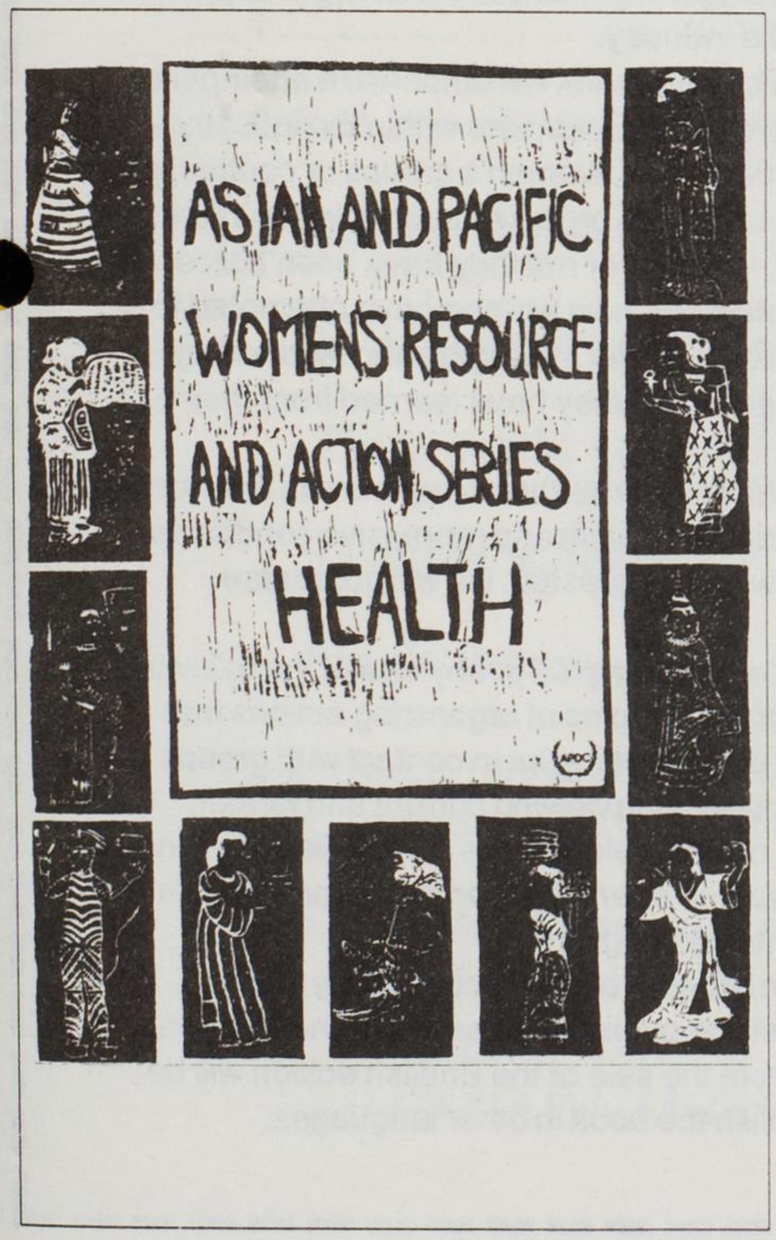
Resources

Asian and Pacific Women's Resource and Action Series: Health

Asian and Pacific Women's Resource Collection Network, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1989, 298pp.

This first publication of the Asian and Pacific Women's Resource and Action Series is a collection from women in the region of their thinking and experiences on a variety of issues critical to women's health. It includes sections on health care systems, maternal mortality, nutrition, work, control of reproduction, psychological health, violence against women, and AIDS. The book is intended for women and community groups, policy makers and researchers, and it is aimed at helping community groups to develop their analysis and strategies on women's health issues, extend their networking and build their resources. It includes an annotated bibliography, a 22-page listing of women's groups in the region, and an appendix with tables showing statistics on women in each country of the region in terms of poverty levels, literacy rates, maternal mortality, health expenditures by governments and other indicators.

Available from: Asian and Pacific Development Centre, Persiaran Duta, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.





The Weave: Women's Popular Health Education Resource Guide

CUSO-Montreal Women's Health Group, Montreal, Canada, 1988, 27pp.

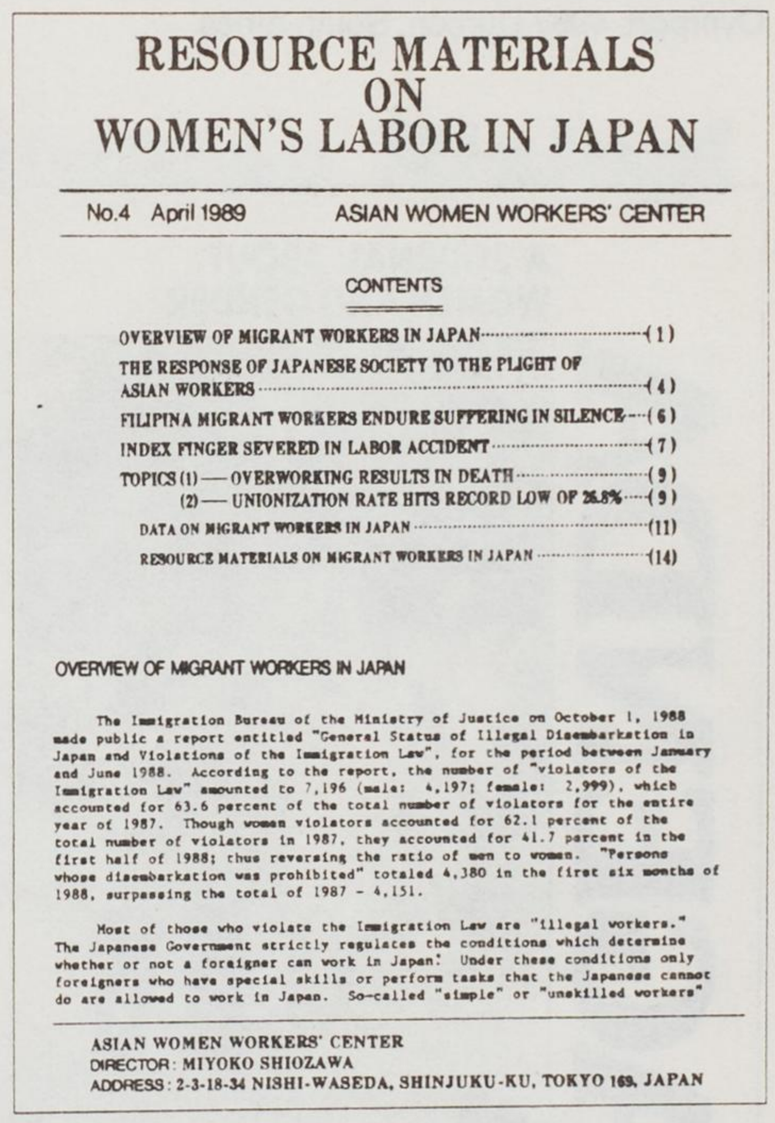
This booklet includes an introduction to popular health education, and listings of organizations and printed and audio-visual materials dealing with popular health education methods, women and pharmaceuticals, reproductive and sexual health, work, immigrant and refugee women's health, women and nutrition, general women's health resources and health education and community health resources. The focus is on both Canadian and international resources although the authors' goal is not to provide an exhaustive list. A second booklet is planned to cover women's health related to the environment, aging, violence and sexual assault, alternative medicine, primary health care in the third world, mental health, and issues particular to indigenous women, lesbians, adolescents and the disabled.

Available from: CUSO-Montreal, 180 est rue Ste-Catherine, Montreal, Quebec, H2X 1K9, Canada.

Resource Materials on Women's Labour in Japan

This newsletter is published once a year by the Asian Women Workers' Centre in Tokyo, and is a unique collection of articles and reports translated into English. The April 1989 issue focussed on migrant women workers in Japan with an overview of the situation of migrant workers--their frequent "illegal" status, Japanese men's participation in "sex tourism" in Asia, the migration of Asian women to work in the sex industry in Japan, violation of the workers' human rights, the economic relationship of Japan and its multinational corporations with Asia. The issue also features articles about the response of Japanese society to the plight of Asian workers, and the exploitation of Filipina workers in the sex industry.

Available from: Asian Women Workers' Center, 2-3-18-34 Nishi-Waseda, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169, Japan.



RESOURCE MATERIALS
ON
WOMEN'S LABOR IN JAPAN

No.4 April 1989 ASIAN WOMEN WORKERS' CENTER

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OVERVIEW OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN JAPAN

The Immigration Bureau of the Ministry of Justice on October 1, 1988 made public a report entitled "General Status of Illegal Disembarkation in Japan and Violations of the Immigration Law", for the period between January and June 1988. According to the report, the number of "violators of the Immigration Law" amounted to 7,196 (male: 4,197; female: 2,999), which accounted for 63.6 percent of the total number of violators for the entire year of 1987. Though women violators accounted for 62.1 percent of the total number of violators in 1987, they accounted for 41.7 percent in the first half of 1988; thus reversing the ratio of men to women. "Persons whose disembarkation was prohibited" totaled 4,380 in the first six months of 1988, surpassing the total of 1987 - 4,151.

Most of those who violate the Immigration Law are "illegal workers." The Japanese Government strictly regulates the conditions which determine whether or not a foreigner can work in Japan. Under these conditions only foreigners who have special skills or perform tasks that the Japanese cannot do are allowed to work in Japan. So-called "simple" or "unskilled workers"

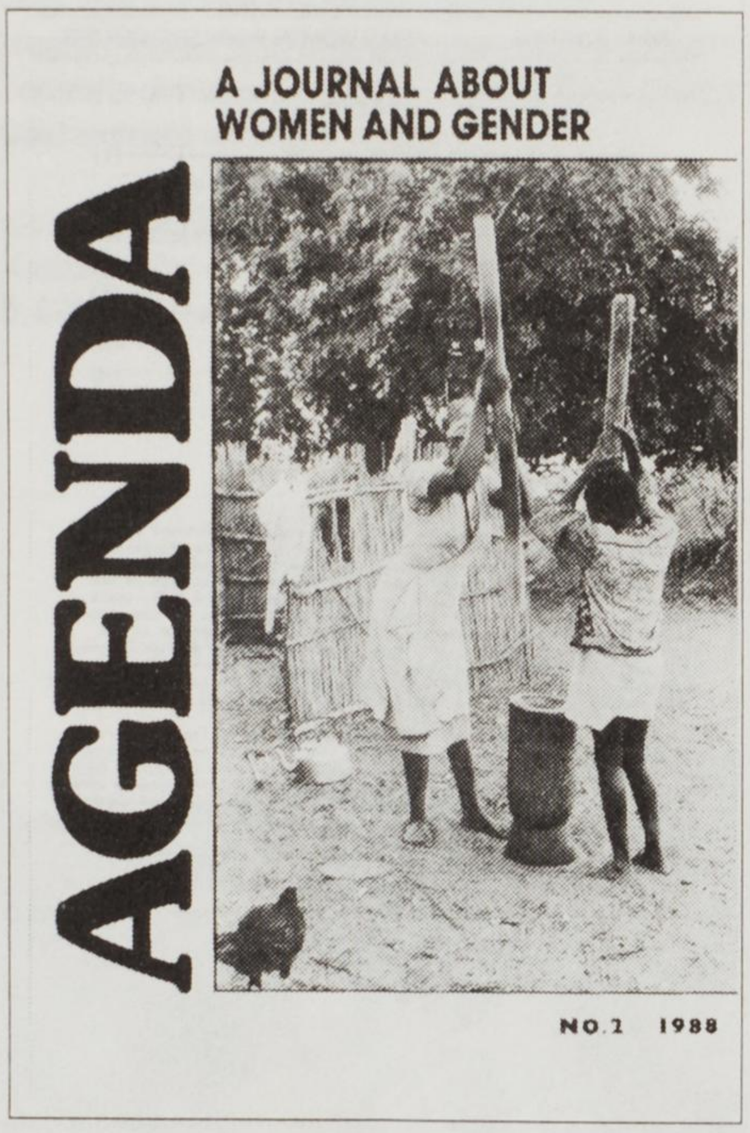
ASIAN WOMEN WORKERS' CENTER
DIRECTOR: MIYOKO SHIOZAWA
ADDRESS: 2-3-18-34 NISHI-WASEDA, SHINJUKU-KU, TOKYO 169, JAPAN

Resources

AGENDA. A Journal about Women and Gender

AGENDA is published twice yearly by a collective of South African women who aim to provide a forum for comment, discussion and debate on all aspects of women's lives, and specifically to attempt to understand the position of women within South African society. The editorial collective believes that women in South Africa experience exploitation and oppression on the basis of their class, race and gender, and struggle is needed on all of these fronts. Agenda No. 2 (1988) contains a number of articles focussing on the battle over consciousness--how organizations interpret and act on women's interest in certain issues, what organizations choose to politicise around and the gap between political statements and actual practices--as well as book reviews and brief reports on particular struggles.

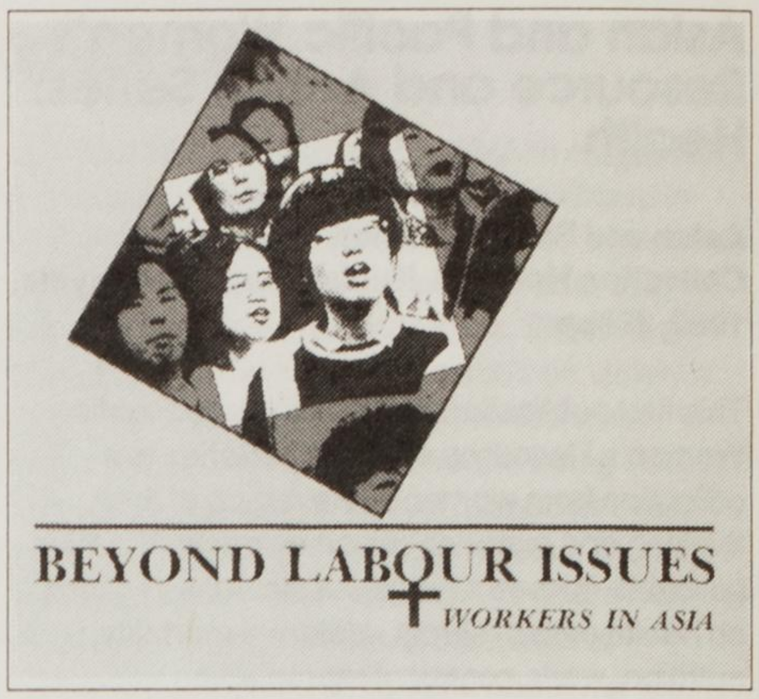
Subscriptions: Individuals US$20.00, Institutions US$40.00.
Available from: AGENDA, P.O. Box 37432, Overport, 4067 Durban, South Africa.



Beyond Labour Issues. Women workers in Asia

Committee for Asian Women (CAW), Hongkong, 70pp.

This book is a report of a conference that CAW organized in Hongkong in October 1987 with about 30 women organizers from all over Asia to share their work and experiences concerning women workers. The theme of the conference was "Beyond Labour Issues", to signify how women workers need to question the way they compartmentalize their work lives and their private family lives. The report includes chapters on each of the workshops and plenaries, brief case studies from five Asian countries, and a conclusion reviewing the final plenary which looked at planning and networking and strategies and visions.



Available from: Committee for Asian Women, 57 Peking Road 4/F, Kowloon, Hongkong.

Women Working Worldwide: Workers Handbook

Women Working Worldwide is seeking help with its project to produce a handbook for women working and/or organizing in the global micro-electronics industry.

The aim of the project is to gather information on the organizing actions of women workers in order to support and strengthen the struggles of workers organizing for basic rights and better conditions of employment. Workers' struggles are strengthened by learning from each others' experiences, particularly in an industry such as micro-electronics, which is located in many countries and dominated by multinational companies. For this reason, the book will be distributed as widely as possible amongst organizations working in support of women in the industry.

The handbook will emphasize attempts by women to organize as workers within the industry--through trade unions, women's groups or centres, or community or church organizations. We are interested in all cases, whether or not they have been successful. Our main interest is how women have attempted to organize, the particular strategies and tactics they have used and what they have learned from their experiences.

We recognize that many women are working and organizing in difficult and repressive conditions. Therefore, where requested, we will guarantee anonymity.

Can you help us in any one of the following ways: locating examples of organizing actions that have taken place; putting us in contact with groups of women workers; interviewing current and former employees of micro-electronics companies; sending us reports of worker' attempts to organize; and translation of documents into English.

In order to ensure accessibility, the handbook will be published in an economical format. Proceeds from the sale of the English edition will be used to publish the book in other languages.

Contact:

Frances Ellery
Project Coordinator
Women Working Worldwide
Box 92
190 Upper Street
London N1 1RQ
England

Yes!
I would like to subscribe to *Voices Rising*!

Name:_____

Address:_____

_____

Enclosed is a cheque or money order for:

_____$20.00 Institutions

_____$10.00 Individuals/Groups

_____Third world women's and popular education groups--free

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Single issues--$5.00 Please send me issue:_____

Please make payment to: ICAE (Women's Program). Send either international money orders, postal money orders, or cheques drawn on Canadian or American banks.

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International Council for Adult Education